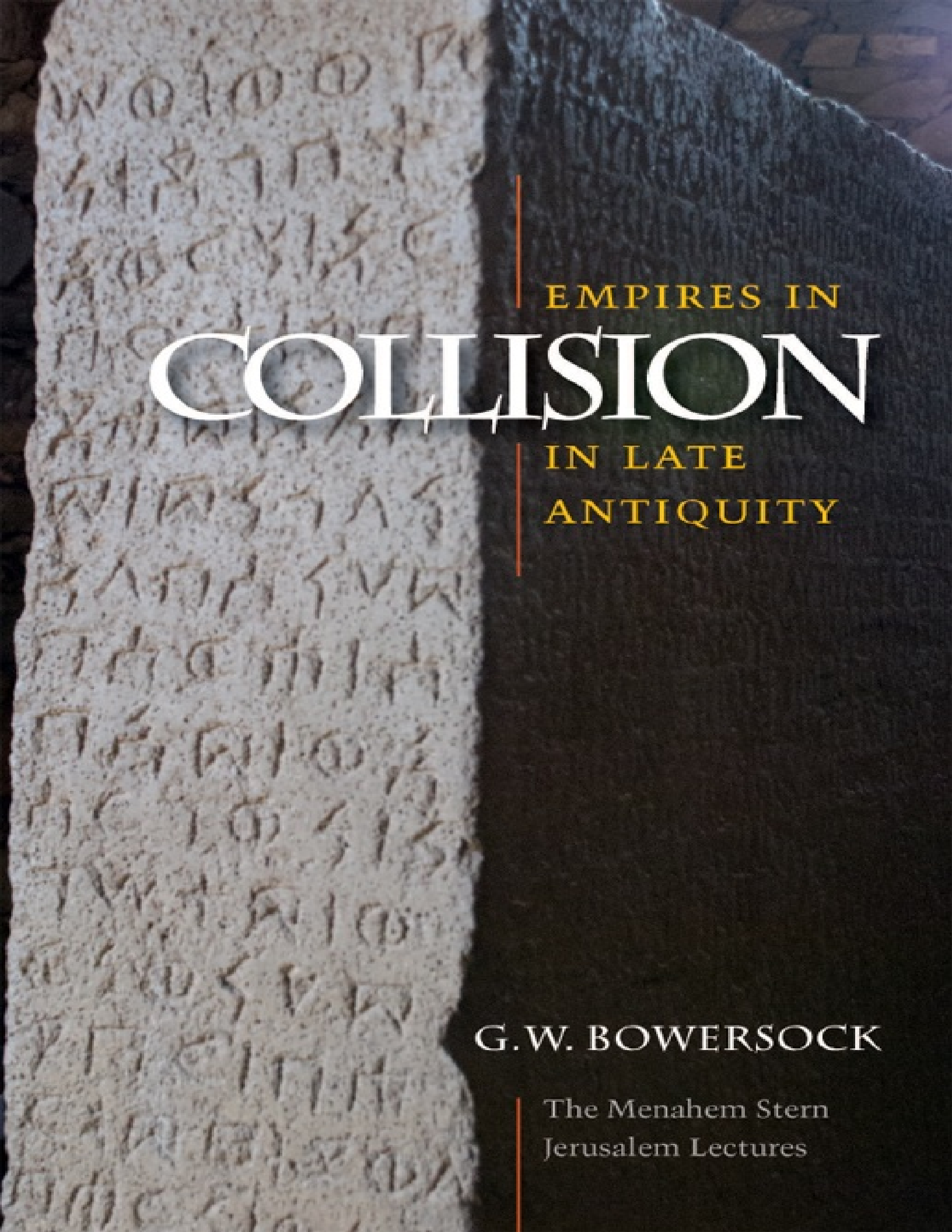


EMPIRES IN COLLISION IN LATE ANTIQUITY

G.W. BOWERSOCK

The Menahem Stern Jerusalem Lectures

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JERUSALEM LECTURES

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FOREWORD

The lectures that follow were delivered by Professor Glen W. Bowersock, Professor Emeritus of Ancient History at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, as the 2011 Jerusalem Lectures in History in Memory of Menahem Stern. Over the last fifteen series of these Jerusalem lectures we, the audience in Jerusalem and then the readers of the published versions, have traveled far and wide in European and Eastern History. By design, only a few of the lecturers and their topics have been close to the issues that were the heart of Professor Stern's own scholarship. With this year's lectures, however, we return to a topic closer to Stern's major contributions. Many of the ancient authors who figure prominently in Bowersock's scholarship also have a place in Stern's collection of *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism*, with the Emperor Julian the most prominent among many examples.

I would like to divide my introductory remarks to these lectures into three sections: (1) first a very brief summary of Professor Bowersock's scholarly career, next (2) a longer discussion of some of his major contributions, and then, finally (3) a few words intended to set the stage for the pages that follow, in which Bowersock will speak for himself.

SCHOLARLY CAREER

Bowersock, as already noted, returned to Jerusalem, as Professor Emeritus of Ancient History at the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, having been an active faculty member there from 1980 to 2006. The Stern lectureship is only one in a long series of distinguished academic responsibilities and invitations, which include the Jerome Lectures at Michigan and the Sather Lectures at Berkeley, to mention two of the most widely known examples, lectureships that have also yielded two of Bowersock's most innovative and original books, to which I will refer below.

CONTRIBUTION

In preparing this brief introduction, I read and reread any number of

Bowersock's books. While doing that, I kept being reminded of a statement of the most fundamental quality of the historian's craft, as stated by Christopher Hill (1912–2003), one of the great figures in the study of seventeenth-century England, active in the previous century. In one of his last books, *The English Bible in the Seventeenth- Century Revolution* (1993), p. 437, Hill wrote: "I remember being struck when I read, at an impressionable age, T. S. Eliot on the art of the poet. 'A poet's mind . . . is constantly amalgamating disparate experience. The ordinary man . . . falls in love, or reads Spinoza, and these two experiences have nothing to do with each other, or with the noise of the typewriter or the smell of the cooking: in the mind of the poet these experiences are always forming new wholes.' . . . Good—imaginative—history is akin to retrospective poetry. It is about life as lived—as much of it as we can recapture." Forming new wholes out of all sorts of seemingly disparate and endless varieties of evidence, in order to get the feel of how people lived in the past and in what ways their sensitivities differed from ours, Hill suggested, was the essence of the historian's labors. And doing that successfully, at the highest possible level, Hill argued, required extra-ordinary skills, beginning with the widest sort of knowledge of every possible kind of relevant source. If that were not challenge enough, the historian also needed to be blessed with the touch of the poet, which would bring this information together into new wholes.

My insight into Bowersock, based on Hill-Eliot, was then confirmed by the title of the collection of essays issued in the aftermath of the conference held to honor Bowersock's retirement from the Institute for Advanced Study in 2006—T. Corey Brennan and Harriet I. Flower (eds.), *East & West: Papers in Ancient History Presented to Glen W. Bowersock* (2008)—and then especially by its introductory chapter by Aldo Schiavone. Schiavone borrowed the title of his contribution to the volume from E. M. Forster's *Howard's End*, calling it "Only Connect." Indeed, as Schiavone elaborated, and I am happy to attest personally, Bowersock is the master of connecting scholars from all over the world with each other and with their work. As Schiavone noted, Bowersock has been an authoritative and prestigious go-between, to whom we have been able to turn and whose help has often been crucial.

But that is only the beginning of the stories of the connections and new wholes that I would like to tell. These connections and new wholes run the entire length of Bowersock's scholarly activities and publications—which number some 379 books, reviews, and articles, at the time of writing this introduction—from the first to the last. His first book, *Augustus and the Greek World* (1965), set the stage for numerous studies to follow by illuminating the ways in which Athens was brought into the Roman empire. The erudition on display was

overwhelming. One detailed prosopographical study of the careers of Greeks connected to Augustan Rome followed another. In terms of larger issues, at one level, the book demonstrated the community of interests formed between the upper classes of the Greek cities and the Empire. As a result of these shrewd and far-seeing moves, Augustus, according to Bowersock, postponed for three centuries the split between West and East. A context or equilibrium resulted that would lead to a fusion best described as Romanized Greekness, Athens placed in Rome.

For much of the past two decades, building on the foundations laid in *Augustus and the Greek World*, Bowersock has focused on cultural flexibility, on boundaries that were not nearly as rigid as one might have imagined. One example from *Fiction as History*, his Sather Classical Lectures from 1994 (p. 53), makes the point: "Fiction, and perhaps fiction alone, signals the disappearance of barbarism as a conceptual means of asserting the superiority of Graeco-Roman culture. The old standard of Hellenism broke down in the second and third centuries, and in doing so it made way for a new kind of Hellenism that could actually embrace much that was formerly barbaric."

Bowersock regularly united new wholes, bringing together apparently disparate elements into a cultural understanding. Again, from *Fiction as History* (p. 143): "The stories of Jesus inspired the polytheists to create a wholly new genre that we might call romantic scripture. And it became so popular that the Christians, in turn, borrowed it back." Pagan culture and Christian culture were each responding to the other, and not always in a polemical fashion.

Not surprisingly, therefore, in describing and evaluating late antique Hellenism, Bowersock emphasized that Hellenism of that era was "not necessarily antithetical to local or indigenous traditions. On the contrary, it provided a new and more eloquent way of giving voice to them," as he wrote in *Hellenism in Late Antiquity*, his Jerome Lectures of 1989, p. 7. Or, again from the same book: "In language, myth, and image, it (Greek culture) provided the means for a more articulate and universally comprehensible expression of local traditions (ibid., p. 9)." Finally, Hellenism in late antiquity, according to Bowersock, sustained local cults, "strengthening and even transforming local worship without eradicating its local character (ibid., p. 21)." Bower-sock argued that this was true even in Egypt of late antiquity, with Hellenism now playing the role of a link with the Egyptian past, and this new attitude replacing what had previously been the strong Egyptian resistance to outsiders.

To take one more example of "only connect," I have already indicated that Bowersock does not see Christianity as the ultimate cause of the "Fall of Rome" (if there ever was a "Fall of Rome"?). Indeed, he argues for a common cultural

basis, in which the leading intellectual lights of the two sides, pagan and Christian, often studied together and saw the world in roughly familiar terms. He insists on a religious equilibrium in Palestine, where Christians often enjoyed and even supported rituals and cults we would define as pagan. Bowersock reminds his reader of the porous nature of religious convictions at the time. Indeed, Bowersock seems to have a good deal of personal sympathy for those relatively placid times of tolerance that he evokes. On the last page of his book on *Mosaics in History* (2006) he makes the following remark (p. 122): "The coherence and tolerance in this disparate world explain the deep peace that most of Palestine, Syria, and Transjordan enjoyed over many centuries. The late antique Middle East was a kind of miracle, and its like has never been seen in that region again." Or, contemplating some of the uncertainties and puzzles presented by the Lod Mosaic (*New York Review of Books*, 14 February 2011, http://www.nybooks.com/blogs/nyrblog/2011/feb/14/lod-mosaic), in one of the most recent items on his long list of publications, Bowersock concluded: "Looking at the mosaic is so satisfying that one can live with this uncertainty, just as I imagine the residents of ancient Lydda did at a time when the religions of the region, including the polytheist ones, borrowed freely from each other's images and cohabited, for a while, in peace."

In sum, for decades, archeological finds—mosaics more than anything else—forced scholars to rethink the relationship between Judaism in the Land of Israel and the larger surrounding culture. In the past decade or so, scholars have been insisting that we must also reconsider the "parting of the ways" between Judaism and Christianity. We are repeatedly reminded that earlier sources should not be read as if they were already aware of differences that would only sharpen and harden later on. The "parting of the ways," our colleagues insist, was more gradual and complex. Bowersock, as I have tried to illustrate in my summary of some of the major points of his work, above, encourages us to recognize that the "parting of the ways" between Christianity and polytheism was also not as simple as we once might have thought. Now, all three legs of the polytheist-Jewish-Christian triangle look far less steady, rigid, and definite. The evidence for the Hellenized culture of the Byzantine Near East complicates any simple scheme for understanding relationships between faiths, Christian groups, polytheists, Jews, and Empires.

THE CURRENT SERIES

The lectures to follow are a series around the theme of "Empires in Collision."

As I stated at the outset of this brief introduction, I leave the announcement of topics, themes, evidence, and exposition to Bowersock. It remained for us in the audience in Jerusalem, and now awaits the reader, to enjoy the pleasure of learning the new wholes and new connections that will be offered on the pages that follow.

Albert I. Baumgarten
Bar Ilan University

PREFACE

I am profoundly grateful to the Historical Society of Israel for its invitation to deliver the 2011 lectures in memory of Menahem Stern, and for the unforgettable warmth and hospitality of the welcome I received in Jerusalem during the course of those lectures in early April of that year. I cannot adequately express my appreciation to the Chairman of the Society, Israel Bartal, and its General Secretary, Zvi Yekutiel, as well as to my dear friend Yosef Kaplan, an admired scholar who was, for a precious year in Princeton, my office neighbor at the Institute for Advanced Study. In attending to every detail of the arrangements of my visit to Jerusalem, Maayan Avineri-Rebhun was unfailingly gracious and considerate, anticipating all my requirements and facilitating all my activities. Many friends contributed to making my stay both pleasurable and profitable. I would be remiss not to mention the infinite kindnesses of Gideon Avni, Albert Baumgarten, Hannah Cotton, Haim Gitler, Haim Goldfus, Benjamin Isaac, Ranon Katzoff, Dudi Mevorach, Youval Rotman, Jon Seligman, Guy and Sarah Stroumsa, and Zeev Weiss. I was lucky to see many friends at the lectures, including my brilliant former student, from many years ago at Harvard, David Schaps. Above all, I was very moved to be able to pay tribute to the great scholar Menahem Stern, whom I had the joy of meeting personally not long before his terrible death at the hands of an assassin.

I conceived these three lectures as a coherent series, moving towards a new vision of the momentous collision of the Byzantine and Persian empires at the same time as the rise of Islam. Traditional hostilities were replayed and exacerbated at the southern margins of the Mediterranean world—in the Red Sea area where and when a powerful new empire, founded upon an equally powerful new religion, was to emerge. The journey from South Arabia and East Africa in the middle of the sixth century to the arrival of the Muslim armies in Jerusalem in 638 encompasses the fall of the Sassanian Empire, which had been in place from the early third century, long before the foundation of the New Rome at Constantinople. Its collapse exposes the tangled roots of the cultural, religious, and political structures of late antiquity in the Near East.

In writing and revising these lectures I profited, as so often in the past, from the learning and judgment of Christopher Jones.

G. W. Bowersock
Institute for Advanced Study,
Princeton

1

BYZANTIUM, ETHIOPIA, AND THE JEWISH KINGDOM OF SOUTH ARABIA

When the old antiquarian and polymath, Pliny, was registering the cities of the Near East in the fifth book of his *Natural History* in the middle of the first century CE, he remarked that in central Syria the great emporium at the Palmyra oasis lay between two powerful empires: *inter duo imperia summa Romanorum Parthorumque* (NH 5. 88). In other words, it lay between the Roman Empire and the Iranian Empire of the Parthians. Rome's authority extended eastwards somewhat beyond Damascus, while the Parthians were in control as far west as the right bank of the Euphrates. But in the year 224 the Parthian Empire gave way to the empire of the Sassanians, who sought to revive the great Persian Empire of the Achaemenids. Only a century or so after that, Constantine moved the capital of the Roman Empire from Rome to Byzantium, which he renamed Constantinople after himself. The city was, however, soon to be generally known as the New, or Second, Rome, or simply Rome, and consequently the governors and soldiers that ruled its empire were widely referred to in the eastern Mediterranean as Romans.[1] Yet, despite these colossal upheavals, the confrontation of superpowers that Pliny had so concisely formulated in the first century remained fundamentally unchanged. In the fourth century, as in the first, Palmyra, although now incorporated into a Byzantine province and home to a legionary detachment, still looked to two great empires, to the west and the east, one of Romans, or Byzantines, and the other of Iranians, now the Sassanian Persians.

Already in the third century the Sassanians had launched three devastating invasions to the west across Syria and Asia Minor. The havoc wrought by their armies left an open wound in the minds as well as the landscapes of the Romans at that time. To their military defeat was added the ultimate humiliation of the Persian capture of the Roman emperor Valerian in the summer of 260. When the

Byzantine Romans took over the administration of the eastern Mediterranean lands, Persia remained as powerful a rival and threat as before, but with the conversion of Constantine to Christianity the confrontation of these two great powers was complicated by the establishment of a monotheist government in Byzantium in the face of the continuing dualism of Persian Zoroastrianism. The ambitions and animosities of both empires were accordingly reignited by religious zeal on both sides. Nature had long since dictated the main geographical area for Persia's challenge to Rome, as Pliny had perceived. The territory at risk lay between the Mediterranean and the Euphrates River, which bounded the Sassanian realm, with its capital at Ctesiphon in Mesopotamia. This vulnerable territory in the Near East included greater Syria, Palestine, Transjordan, Anatolia, and the nascent Christian kingdom of Armenia.

The fifth century saw new and more subtle ways for the Byzantines and the Persians to challenge each other, and to win allies for their rulers and religions. The internal dissent that arose among Christians after the Council of Chalcedon in 451 greatly complicated the role of the Romans of Byzantium, although Chalcedonians and Monophysites certainly could, and occasionally did, join forces when necessary. But new opportunities for forging alliances arose in late antiquity. Both Byzantium and Persia found it increasingly effective to lend their support to client peoples in marginal areas, where the conflict between the superpowers could be played out more remotely. Alliances of this kind were quite unlike the old Roman imperial habit of propping up dependent, or so-called client, kings in tiny principalities.[2] In the late antique Near East, there were tribal organizations that were partly sedentary and partly nomadic, and presided over by influential sheikhs, who could sometimes think of themselves as kings but were very different from the kings of the past.[3] The sheikhs of the Jafnid clan, the so-called Ghassānids, allied themselves with the Byzantine emperor, who thereby acquired influence in Syria, Palestine, and northern Arabia according to the shifting settlements and families of the clan. The sheikhs of the Naṣrids, traditionally known as Lakhmids, forged links with Persia that brought Sassanian influence directly into the Arabian peninsula.

Even so, there had been no open conflict between the two superpowers in these regions until the Arabs of Ḥimyar, in the southwestern part of Arabia, provided the catalyst that brought in the empires of Byzantium and Persia, as well as the lesser but nonetheless expanding empire of Ethiopia as well. A surge of imperialist ambition on both sides of the Red Sea proved to be explosive, and it serves to open up an unfamiliar but immensely revealing window on late

antiquity generally.[4] The empire to which Ethiopia aspired in the Arabian peninsula proved a match for the expansion of Ḥimyar in that area. Both Persia and Byzantium were unable to ignore these burgeoning empires at the margins of their world. Consequently, what went on in Arabia in the sixth century had dramatic repercussions in Palestine and Syria during the century that followed, when another new empire came into being, fueled by a new religion that we know today as Islam.

Between the beginning of the third century and about 270, the pagan king (negus) of Ethiopia controlled an army that occupied parts of southwestern Arabia.[5] What brought the Ethiopians there and how they were organized is unclear, as is the cause of their departure from the peninsula about 270, when the territories of Saba and Ḥimyar returned to the control of their indigenous peoples. But it was not long until what is known today as the Kingdom of Ḥimyar, with its capital at Ẓaphār, emerged out of these territories. The Ethiopians never forgot that they had been in Arabia. In the century after their departure the kings of Axum not only instituted a coinage in all three metals but arrogated titles that asserted sovereignty over places in Arabia where they no longer ruled.[6] The negus represented himself as a king of kings, although there is no reason to think that he was imitating the Persian shahin-shah. The claim to be a king of kings was by no means confined to Persia, and the negus did not hesitate to be specific about the kings over whom he ruled. These were the rulers of Ḥimyar, as well as of dhu-Raydān in the Ḥaḍramawt and Saba in Yemen. He combined these empty claims to overseas sovereignty with more justifiable assertions of rule nearer home in East Africa.[7]

The titulature of the negus in the fourth century is known to us from the extensive epigraphy of Aezanas, or ‘Ezana, whose inscriptions allow us to follow his career in some detail. He began as a great pagan ruler, claiming to be the son of the god Ares, who was equated with the Ethiopian Maḥrem, and he ended as a devout Christian ruler who proclaimed that he owed his kingship to God. We can watch the whole process of conversion played out in the texts of his long inscriptions. The arrival of Christianity did nothing, however, to lessen the irredentist claims of the negus, even as he transferred his allegiance from Ares (Maḥrem) to the Christian God. Quite the contrary. Ecclesiastical legend, and it may be no more than this, attributes the Christianization of Axum to a certain Frumentius from Alexandria, although the actual date of the conversion

of Aezanas is irrecoverable.[8] The suggestion of Stuart Munro-Hay that it had already happened by 340 is not unreasonable.[9] The inscriptions of Aezanas at Axum proclaimed his grandeur in no less than two languages and three scripts—Ethiopic script (left to right) and Sabaic (right to left) for Ge'ez, and Greek letters for Greek. These thereby encompassed the cultures of both sides of the Red Sea.

Stele of Aezanas discovered at Axum in May 1981, inscribed on the front, back, and right side. On the front, a text in Ge'ez (classical Ethiopic), but written from right to left in the South Arabian (Sabaic) script, and beneath that a similar text in Ge'ez, but written from left to right in unvocalized Ethiopic script, continuing on the right side. On the back, in Greek, is a comparable account of Aezanas and his achievements. Inscriptions published in Recueil des inscriptions de l'Ethiopie*, vol. 1, nos. 185 bis (Semitic texts), 270 bis (Greek). Photograph courtesy of Finbarr Barry Flood.*





The upper part of the front face with the beginning of the Ge'ez text in South Arabian (Sabaic) script. Photograph courtesy of Finbarr Barry Flood.

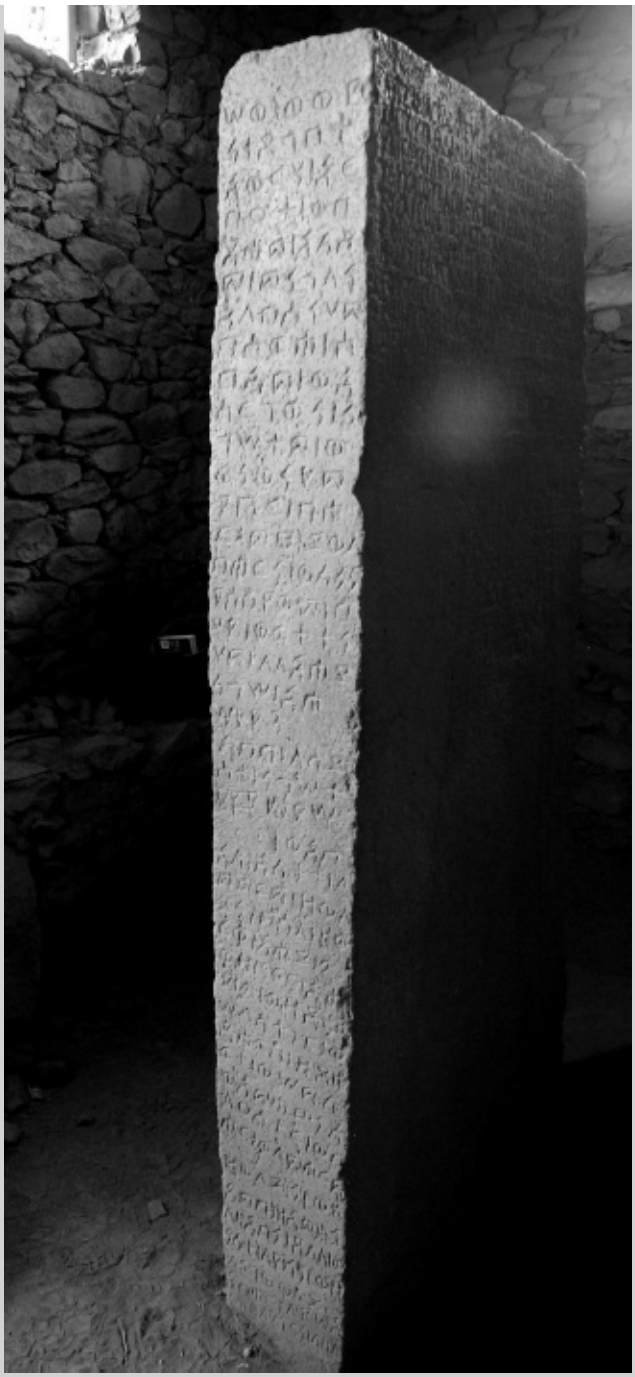
The inscriptions of Aezanas manifestly served as the inspiration for the dynamic negus of the early sixth century, Ella Asbeha, known as Kālēb. The Christianity that he inherited is fully developed in the preamble to a text he caused to be inscribed in Ge'ez, but in the Sabaic script: "To the glory of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost."[10] By the time of Kālēb, Christianity had put down solid roots in Axum. In laying claim to overseas territories that he did not actually rule, Ella Asbeha/Kālēb thus resumed the tradition of Aezanas whose inscriptions he so obviously imitated. As Kālēb's claims became increasingly strident, they were matched by social and political upheavals across the water in Ḥimyar that gave him precisely the opportunity he needed for overt intervention. He was now in a position to propel the Axumite regime to realize its claim to Southwest Arabia. How, we must ask, had all this come about?

Ethiopian imperialism in the sixth century depended upon a great change that had, curiously, taken place in Ḥimyar in the late fourth century, exactly when Aezanas had begun to proclaim openly his conversion to Christianity. This had led him to assume a more aggressive public stance towards the Arabian territories. Like Aezanas, the king in Ḥimyar at that time also adopted a new religion. But, fatefully, it was not the same religion. What happened on either side of the Red Sea reflected both the old and the new territorial claims of the

two kingdoms. The religious conversions they each underwent ultimately delivered the spark that set off an international conflagration.

Just as news of the territorial boasts of the negus reached the Arabian peninsula, news of his conversion from Ethiopian paganism to Christian monotheism must also have arrived there. Of course South Arabia had encountered monotheism before through Jewish communities in the Ḥaḍramawt and possibly by way of Jewish immigrants from Yathrib in the north.[11] So what happened in Axum would not have been altogether incomprehensible to the Ḥimyarites, even if they lacked any deep understanding of Christian doctrine or Christian sectarianism. The kings of Ḥimyar, who had taken over all the grandiose titles of the Ethiopian kings, suddenly, remarkably, and inexplicably also became monotheists themselves. But their monotheism was Jewish.[12] This extraordinary development, so closely following the changes in Ethiopia, is amply documented in the Sabaic epigraphy.

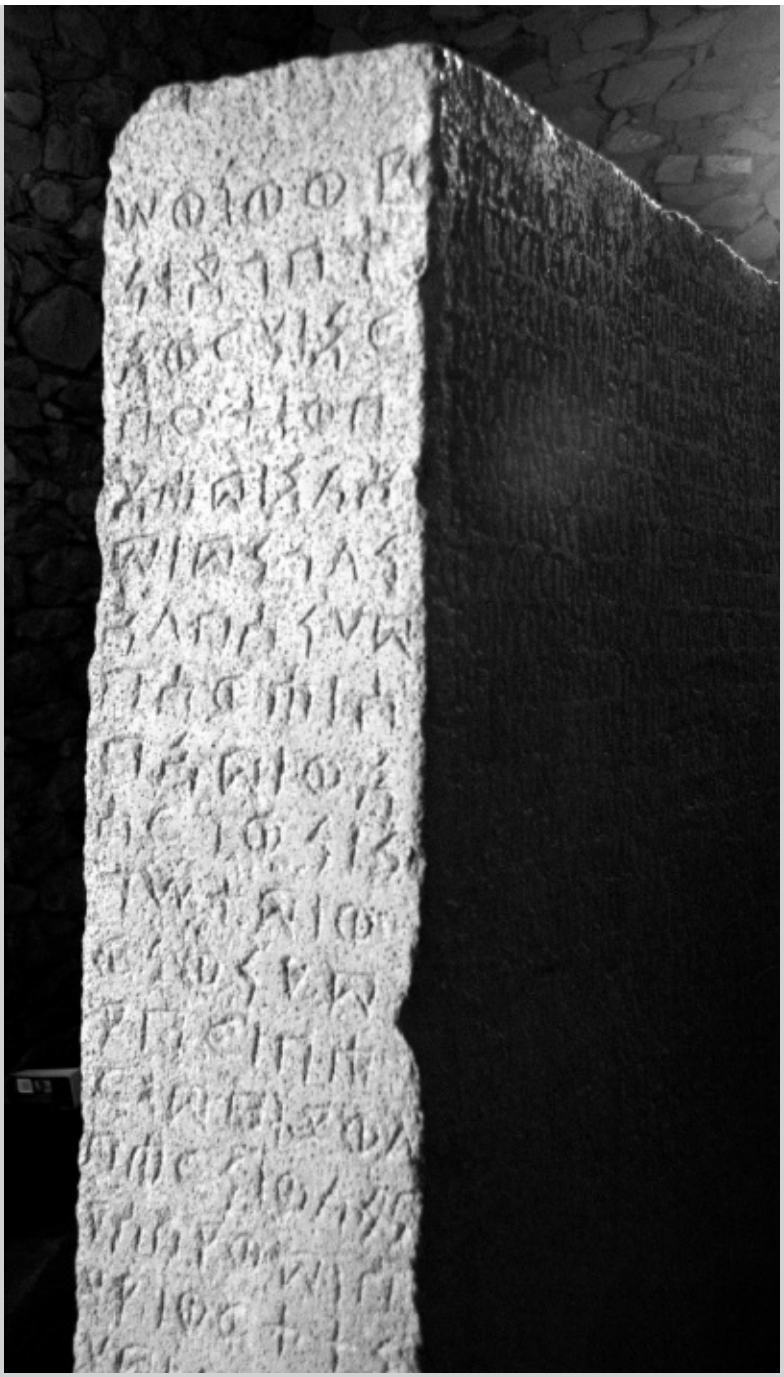
The right side of the stone, with the continuation of the text in unvocalized Ethiopic script. Photograph courtesy of Finbarr Barry Flood.



In fact, the history of Southwest Arabia has largely been written from its inscriptions, which fill the gaps in the literary record from the fourth century onwards, when Aezanas arrogated such Arabian titles as king of Ḥimyar, Saba, dhu-Raydān, Tihāma, and Ḥaḍramawt. The pretentions of the negus had not passed unnoticed in Ḥimyar, particularly as it moved to monotheism. From the

reigns of the earliest Jewish Ḥimyarite kings, in particular that of Abīkarib ʿAsad in about 440, a repertoire of royal titulature starts to appear locally on the Sabaic inscriptions. In addition to titles that included king of Saba, dhu-Raydān, Ḥaḍramawt, and Yemen, Abīkarib declared himself ruler over the Arab tribes of Tawd ("high country"), and Tihāma (on the coast).[13] The proximity of such evidently imperialistic titulature in both Ethiopia and Ḥimyar just a few decades apart, with the Ethiopians starting first, can hardly be coincidental. The Ḥimyarites had presumably learned, either from traders' reports or from actual visits, what their former overlords were asserting in Axum, not least in their own Sabaic script. The disappearance of polytheism there and the appearance of the imperialist royal titulature occurred over a period of about fifty years, and these were precisely the years during which polytheism utterly vanished from South Arabia.

The upper part of the text on the right side. Photograph courtesy of Finbarr Barry Flood.





The Greek inscription on the back of the stele. Photograph courtesy of Finbarr Barry Flood.

By now the Judaism of the government in Ḥimyar in the fifth and early sixth centuries is an established fact of Arabian history. It makes no difference if we describe this, as some have done, as the old Arab worship of Raḥmān transferred to the God of the Jews. Jewish Raḥmānism is still Judaism, and the inscriptions that called these Arab converts the people of Israel bear that out.[14] But the story is complicated by the rich epigraphical evidence that amply reinforces the literary tradition. Above all, that tradition touches upon two notorious episodes of coercion and brutality on the part of Ḥimyarite Arab Jewish kings in their dealings with the Christian communities inside their kingdom. The first of these episodes, from the third quarter of the fifth century, concerns a Christian martyr called Azqir.[15] We have explicit reference to rabbis who assembled to judge him. The second is the complex dossier of texts on the massacre of Christians in 523 in the city of Najrān at the initiative of the Ḥimyarite king, Yūsuf As'ar Yath'ar, who is also known under four other names—dhu-Nuwās in Arabic, Dounaas in Greek, Masrūq in Syriac, and Finḥās in Arabic and Ethiopic.[16] Both episodes provide vivid testimony for the persecution of Christians in Ḥimyar at the hands of their Jewish overlords, and both reveal concerted efforts to force mass conversion to Judaism.

The massacre at Najrān is by far the more important of the two persecutions that the Jewish regime in Ḥimyar launched against its Christians. It not only convulsed but transformed central and southwestern Arabia. It led to an invasion from Ethiopia that restored Christianity to the region for a period of nearly fifty years, and it allowed not only the negus in Axum but the emperor in Constantinople, as well as the king of Sassanian Persia, to become major forces in dictating the politics and religion of Arabia. This, in turn, positioned all three rulers to become power brokers in the rapidly changing world into which Muḥammad was born.

The Arabs never lost sight of the traditional polytheist culture that the conversion of the Ḥimyarites to Judaism had seriously curtailed. Meanwhile, the presence of newly energized Christian communities that owed their salvation to the monotheist Ethiopians guaranteed that the Persians would work even harder to reassert their alliance with the Jews and the Naṣrid rulers in al-Ḥīra. The tumultuous events in sixth-century Arabia may reasonably be called the crucible of Islam.

The massacre that wiped out the Christians at Najrān in 523 inaugurated a portentous challenge to the old order. Fortunately we now have no need to speak with uncertainty about the date of this event, since recent research by Iwona Gajda and her teacher Christian Robin have finally established 110 BCE as the chronological era that was used in Ḥimyarite dating, and hence we can accurately render Ḥimyarite dates in our own chronology.[17] We can say with confidence, on the basis of the inscriptions that Gajda and Robin have analyzed, that after a brief restoration of Ethiopian-sponsored Christianity in Ḥimyar between about 520 and 522, the militantly Jewish ruler Yūsuf reinstated the Judaism that had dominated the kingdom ever since the end of the fourth century. The irredentist claims of Axum that had begun with Aezanas at about the same time as Judaism came to Ḥimyar had grown ever more strident as the monarchy became more Christian.

The strong negus who assumed the biblical name of Kālēb can be observed through his inscriptions as an advocate not only of Ethiopia's claim to territory in the Arabian peninsula but equally of Ethiopia's claim to represent the house of David and to boast a direct descent from Solomon—a lineage celebrated in Ethiopia's national book, the *Kebra Nagast* ("The Glory of Kings").[18] When

Yūsuf reasserted Jewish rule in Ḥimyar in about 522, Kālēb was already poised to invade the country, in fact for the second time. The two years of Christian rule, which Yūsuf had managed to wipe out, are documented in the epigraphy, and appear, from an allusion in the Syriac *Book of the Ḥimyarites*, to have been the result of some prior Ethiopian invasion.[19]

Our knowledge of Yūsuf's aggressive campaign against the Christians in his kingdom depends upon a complex dossier of interrelated texts, in which the massacre at Najrān is the principal subject. These include, first and foremost, the Greek hagiographical account of the martyrdom of Ḥārith, or St. Arethas in Greek, at Najrān and a horrific letter written in Syriac by a monophysite priest called Symeon from Beth Arshām near Seleuceia on the Tigris, inside Persia.[20] There is little doubt that the Greek text derives substantially from the letter of Symeon, and that both were written down soon after the events they relate. Symeon's letter was subsequently abbreviated in other Syriac ecclesiastical works. In 1971 Irfan Shahîd published a second letter about the Najrān massacre and argued that this too was a text by Symeon of Beth Arshām. But a very recent stylistic analysis of the two letters by David Taylor in Oxford has shown conclusively that the second letter not only is not by the author of the first, but is also of far less historical value.[21] Neither letter, he insists, should be treated as a straightforward historical document, because both are obviously tendentious, but the first is full of details that appear genuine. They can, to some extent, be controlled by another Syriac work, the *Book of the Ḥimyarites*, but that is no warrant for assuming, as Shahîd did, that Symeon was also the author of that too.

What emerges from these texts is that Yūsuf tried to exterminate the Christian communities in his kingdom both by destroying them and by trying to force their congregations to convert to Judaism. He concentrated his efforts on the significant Christian population of Najrān. He himself reported in detail on his persecution in a letter that he sent to a meeting held at Ramla, southeast of the Naṣrid camp at al-Ḥīra, under the auspices of sheikh al- Mundhir (Alamoundaros in Greek). Al-Mundhir had convoked this gathering with the support and representation of his ally, the Persian king. The Byzantine emperor Justin also sent a delegate called Abramos to this meeting, as we know from an account of another embassy written by Abramos' son, Nonnosus.[22] Present for the discussions, and clearly taking careful notes, was Symeon of Beth Arshām, who wrote down all that was said in a letter he addressed to the homonymous

abbot, Symeon, at Gabboula in the Jafnid territory of Syria.

The scene must have been a strange one, and one that is hard to visualize. The conference at Ramla brought together Persian and Byzantine interests, under the auspices of a Persian client, to listen to a letter in which the Ḥimyarite king proudly described in excruciating detail the torments he had inflicted on the Christians of Najrān. The messenger that read out his letter felt free to supplement it with additional horrors, and the letter itself included impassioned speeches from some of the martyrs themselves as they professed their faith. Why Yūsuf chose to boast of his murderous actions to representatives of Byzantium and Persia, in the presence of a dynamic and vociferous Christian, may only be surmised. Should we really believe that Yūsuf provided a platform for the martyrs to address the Ramla conference, even indirectly, in this way? The Persians had thrown their support behind the Jews in Arabia as well as the sheikh, al-Mundhir, who hosted the conference. Yūsuf may have wanted not only to win Persian approval for his extermination of Ḥimyarite Christians but, at the same time, to have secured a buffer against reprisals from Christian powers such as Byzantium or Ethiopia. In the case of Byzantium, he need not at this stage have worried, since the Chalcedonian court showed little interest in sending military aid to overseas Monophysites. But it was not averse to inciting others—Ethiopians in particular—to act.

The king's bloody narrative was so vivid and provocative as to make Symeon of Beth Arshām sound an alarm among the Monophysites of the Near East. He wanted his report of what he heard to be spread to Ethiopia, Antioch, Tarsus, Edessa, and Cappadocian Caesarea. Such activism was fully consistent with what we know of the man, of whom John of Ephesus wrote, "As if God made him ready and as if the earth had vomited him up, Symeon would suddenly spring up and be present there, since from the greatness of his zeal and fervor of his will he did not rest and sit still in one district." It is hard to say how he contrived to be in attendance at Ramla, but his presence there was obviously in character.

The deeply rooted ambition of Kālēb to recover Ethiopian rule in Arabia was not lost on the emperor Justin at the time of the Najrān massacre nor subsequently on his great successor, Justinian. If the Ethiopians could be persuaded to act, their monophysitism could be ignored in Byzantium's interest. The Ethiopians had, as we have seen, a past history of invasion and occupation, and Yūsuf's appeal to Ramla did absolutely nothing to protect him against

Kālēb. The pogrom at Najrān occurred in 523, the meeting at Ramla in 524, and Kālēb's army was in Ḥimyar by 525. Yūsuf was overthrown, and an Ethiopian Christian called Sumyafa Ashwa, whose name Procopius hellenized to Esimphaios, was promptly installed in his place. But he did not last long. A rival Ethiopian Christian called Abraha toppled him with the aid of Ethiopian troops.[23]

It was at this highly sensitive juncture that the Byzantines, under their new emperor, Justinian, began to play an active role by exploiting the Christian presence in Ḥimyar to oppose their Persian enemies, The plan was to enlist the support of the Ethiopians, and their clients in Ḥimyar, on the Byzantine side. The Ethiopian invasion of Arabia had not begun as a salvo in a proxy war between two great empires,[24] but by the early 530s it had turned into one. Procopius is explicit about Justinian's policy: "The emperor Justinian," he wrote, "had the idea of allying himself with the Ethiopians and the Ḥimyarites, in order to work against the Persians."[25] The Ethiopian–Byzantine alliance was inevitably uneasy, since the Chalcedonian regime was not naturally comfortable with Monophysites. But Justinian apparently saw an opportunity to intercept Persian commercial interests in the Red Sea, as Procopius observed. The Byzantine ambassador to Ramla, Abramos, was called back into service to negotiate a peace treaty with the tribes of Kinda and Ma'add in central Arabia after the overthrow of the Jews in Ḥimyar. Justinian subsequently appointed Abramos' son, Nonnosus, to undertake a twofold diplomatic mission, of which he left an account that the patriarch Photius was fortunately able to read and summarize. He was to bring Qays, the sheikh of Kinda, from Arabia to Constantinople and then to call upon the negus himself in Axum. But Nonnosus failed to deliver Qays, and so Justinian instead sent Abramos back to the region to bring the sheikh to Constantinople, where he was duly assigned hegemony over the three provinces of Palestine, presumably to guarantee Byzantine control of the region where Kindite forces had carried out devastating incursions under Anastasius at the beginning of the century.[26] Meanwhile, the victorious Kālēb in Ethiopia retreated into a saintly life in a monastery and sent his crown to Jerusalem to be displayed in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

In Arabia, Abraha, the successor of the short-lived Esimphaios, succeeded in strengthening his own position in Ḥimyar by becoming increasingly distant from his Ethiopian overlords, whose puppet he refused to be. In 547, at a time when he was occupied in well-publicized repairs to a ruptured dam in Mārib, he

convoked another and grander international conference in the southwestern peninsula. In doing so he implicitly acknowledged the increasingly powerful role of the great powers in the affairs of Arabia. At Mārib, Abraha received ambassadors from all over—the negus in Ethiopia, the emperor in Constantinople, the king of the Persians, the Naṣrid sheikh al-Mundhir in Ḥīra, the Jafnid sheikh Ḥārith ibn Jabala, and Abu Karib, whom Justinian had recently appointed as the new phylarch of Palestine. Abraha clearly recognized, as we can see from a great inscription he put up in celebration of his achievements, that his kingdom could simultaneously exploit and influence the ambitions of the main players in the Near East: Byzantium (reinforced by Ḥārith), Persia (reinforced by al-Mundhir), and Ethiopia.[27]

But the polytheist Arabs of the peninsula were conspicuous by their absence from the conference at Mārib. This may well explain a dramatic, even desperate, move a few years later. In 552 Abraha launched a great expedition into central Arabia, north of Najrān and south of Mecca, as we know from an important inscription, first published in 1951.[28] Some historians have been sorely tempted to bring this expedition into conjunction with a celebrated legend in the Arabic tradition that is reflected in Sura 105 of the Qur'ān (*al fīl*, the elephant). Tradition holds that Abraha undertook an attack on Mecca itself with the aim of taking possession of the Ka'aba, the holy place of the pagan god Hubal. The tradition of Arabic commentary (*tafsīr*) claimed that Abraha's forces were led by an elephant, and that they were miraculously repelled by a flock of birds. Abraha's assault on the ancient holy place is thought to have occurred in the very year of Muḥammad's birth (570), and the path over which Abraha's elephant and men are believed to have marched is known even today in local legend as the Road of the Elephant (*ḍarb al-fīl*). But obviously the expedition of 552 cannot be the same, if we are to credit the coincidence of the Year of the Elephant with the year of the Prophet's birth.

Whatever the precise chronology, Abraha's retreat marked the beginning of the end of his power, and that in turn provided an opportunity for which the Persians had been waiting. A feckless son of Abraha, whose name seems to have been, of all things, Axum, presided over the dissolution of the Ethiopian kingdom of Ḥimyar. By 570 or so the Axumite presence was gone. The Persians recognized that at last the moment had come to expel the Christians of whatever confession from the region. They took over Ḥimyar without a struggle. Hence a

Persian ascendancy, which Arabian Jewry, from its past history, understandably welcomed, came to the peninsula just as Muḥammad first saw the light of day in Mecca. Arabic tradition maintained that this was the Year of the Elephant, even if the Elephant may have come and gone decades before. One thing is certain. This was the beginning of the end of the struggle between Byzantium and Persia. The final phase of the collision of late antiquity's two greatest empires started more or less about the same time as the Prophet was born.

2

THE PERSIAN CAPTURE OF JERUSALEM

In the fateful year 614 the armies of the Sassanian king Khosroes II set up siege towers outside Jerusalem, breached its walls, and invaded the city. With due allowance for the partisan and rhetorical exaggeration in our sources, it is safe to say that this invasion was the most devastating event to befall this ancient and holy city since the Roman forces had brought to an end the rebellion of Bar Kokhba in 135 and expelled the Jewish population. The Persians had made their way to Jerusalem after assaulting Syrian Antioch and moving southwards by way of Caesarea-on-the-sea. Apart from marauding monks, Samaritan uprisings, a minor disturbance under the Caesar Gallus, and the indeterminate mischief wrought by the apostate Julian, Palestine had not seen such violence or devastation for well over four centuries. Although the Christian population grew in number over this period, the region had been generally hospitable to indigenous Jews, who flourished particularly in the Galilee and nourished an increasingly large cadre of rabbinical scholars.[1] Traditional local pagan cults continued to flourish along with traditional Hellenism, which had in late antiquity led to the widespread designation of pagans simply as Hellenes. The invasion of the Sassanian Persians delivered a shattering jolt to this world after so many centuries and, in retrospect, foreshadowed another great invasion just over two decades later. The relation between the Persian capture of Jerusalem in 614 and the Muslim seizure of the city in 638 has nourished endless scholarly and homiletic debate. We have finally reached a point at which once-fashionable dogmas have spectacularly dissolved one after another.

It will no longer do to claim that the Persian devastation left the region so physically, economically, and spiritually ruined that it was inevitably receptive to the armies of the Prophet, nor will it do to claim that the Muslims wiped out the vestiges of the old symbiosis of Jews, Christians, and pagans. What happened between 614 and 638 was undoubtedly traumatic, but the wounds that

Jerusalem and Palestine suffered were by no means mortal. It has gradually become apparent that the cultural, economic, and religious landscape did not look very much different after 638 from what it had done before 614. The religious and ideological impulses behind the momentous upheavals of that period spawned such varied and often contradictory narratives of what had just happened that only the most arduous exercise of historical source criticism and archaeology can make sense of it all. And everyone knows that historical source criticism and archaeology have not always been the most congenial or accommodating allies.

The Persian arrival in Jerusalem had its ultimate origin in the murder of the Byzantine emperor Maurice in 602 through the intrigue of the usurper Phocas. The king of Persia, Khosroes II, had owed his throne to the favorable intercession of Maurice at a difficult time, and so when Maurice was removed by a usurper, Khosroes rightly saw an opportunity to avenge his benefactor's death by taking advantage of the new weakness of the Byzantine Empire. He began a formidable campaign of aggression that constituted the greatest incursion of Persian forces into Syria, Asia Minor, and Palestine since the conquests of Shapur I in the third century. The dormant hostility of the Sassanians, which Maurice had successfully used to his own advantage, now became terrifyingly active. This initiative not only opened the way for the removal of Phocas by the exceptionally astute Heraclius in 610. It also brought the two empires into direct conflict under the personal leadership of their emperors. In 613, Khosroes inflicted a crushing defeat upon Heraclius in Asia Minor. He subsequently moved on into Syrian Antioch, which had barely recovered from the devastation of a Persian sack of the city in 540.[2] The taking of Antioch was an ominous prelude to the taking of Jerusalem in the following year.

Up to the moment of Maurice's death, the Sassanian Empire, which had long been Byzantium's rival in the Near and Middle East, had been quiescent during the aggressive expansionism of Justinian, and the two empires had pursued their interests obliquely by supporting client tribes such as the Jafnids (or Ghassānids) in Syria and the Naṣrids (or Lakhmids) in the south.[3] In the Arabian peninsula the Persians had, as we have seen, brilliantly exploited the ambitions of the Arab converts to Judaism in Ḥimyar. With the rise of a strong king in Ethiopia who promoted an irredentist claim to recover former Ethiopian dominions in Arabia, the Christian negus in Axum was able to further his ambitions by coming to the aid of Christians across the Red Sea when they were suffering a cruel persecution at the hands of the Jewish Ḥimyarites. We have seen in the previous

lecture that this gave the Persians an opportunity to reassert their support of the Jews in opposition to the Christians, whose final operations in the Arabian peninsula had received explicit encouragement from the Byzantine emperor. The Chalcedonian beliefs of the New Rome did not at all stand in the way of using the monophysite Ethiopians as a buffer against the Persians, who were more worried about the Byzantine state than its doctrinal position. The Nestorian Christians in the Sassanian realm were rarely a pawn in sixth-century power politics. But Sassanian support of the Jews served as a banner of anti-Byzantine policy. It was only to be expected that when the Ethiopian Abraha, whom Axum had duly installed as its Christian ruler in Ḥimyar, lost his grip and fell from power, he was soon replaced by a Persian client, who remained there throughout the last decades of the sixth century.[4]

By the time that the army of Khosroes stood outside the walls of Jerusalem, it could hardly have been a secret that Jews had every reason to expect the support of the invaders. Persian sympathy for Jews in the Arabian peninsula was firmly on record, and it is likely that Jewish Ḥimyarites in Palestine, such as those whose tombs have been found at Bet She'arim, would have been well aware of what their co-religionists owed to the Persians. Not far from Jerusalem itself, the recently discovered epitaph for a certain Leah points to an even closer link to the holy city. It has a bilingual text, starting with a quotation from Daniel, in mixed Aramaic and Hebrew and, below it, a text in South Arabian Sabaic.[5]

It is clear from two surviving texts that were composed within a few decades of 614 that the Jews were not disappointed in any hopes they may have placed in the Persian invaders, and that the Jews in Jerusalem, for their part, did what they could to support the Persian presence. Despite the ancient history of the Babylonian Captivity, the Jews had had a long presence in Mesopotamia, and we should not be altogether surprised that the Jews in Jerusalem in 614 cooperated willingly with the Persian invaders. What we learn from the history of Ḥimyar in the previous century only confirms what we find in two eyewitness sources for Jerusalem.

The first of these, on which there is much to be said, was written by a monk of Mar Saba after the return of the True Cross to the holy city by Heraclius in 630. He bears the name of Strategios, although this name has, in recent scholarship, sometimes been illicitly annexed to that of a ghostly character called Antiochus or Antiochius, whom Migne's *Patrologia Graeca* has patched together from various texts. There is no doubt that Strategios was not Antiochus or Antiochius and that he wrote his narrative originally in Greek.[6] But unfortunately for us, we

know it only from Georgian and Arabic translations. The Georgian tradition is more reliable and certainly better edited. Despite the efforts of the excellent Belgian scholar Gérard Garitte in rendering the Georgian version into fluent Latin, historians down to the present have tended to favor a seriously abridged English version that F. C. Conybeare published from the initial Georgian edition early in the twentieth century.[7] Strategios' narrative is undoubtedly hyperbolic in places, but it is marvelously circumstantial, with many topographical details concerning recognizable places in Jerusalem as well as an explicit reference to the monk Modestus, whose correspondence with the Armenian Katholikos Komitas guarantees his historicity. Strategios strangely blamed the fate of the Christians in Jerusalem on the city's circus factions, the Blues and the Greens, because he considered them responsible for the reckless conduct that led the Christian population into sin. He saw the Persian invasion as a divine penalty. Strategios' reports of massacres and communal burials, as well as his claims of Persian destruction of churches and shrines, necessarily require the sober control of archaeology, and fortunately this has very recently become available.

But, before turning to that as well as to the second eyewitness source, we need to examine Strategios' account of the Jews in connection with the argument advanced so far. Here is what he reports:

> The vicious Jews, both enemies of truth and haters of Christ, greatly rejoiced as they saw the Christians handed over into the hands of the enemy. They conceived an evil plan in accordance with their ill will towards the people, for they had acquired a great reputation with the Persians as the betrayers of Christians. At that time they were standing by the edge of a reservoir and shouting to the sons of God, who were detained there, and they said to them, "If you want to avoid death, become Jews and deny Christ. Come up from there and come to us. We will buy you back from the Persians with our money, and you will thereby benefit through us." The wicked intent of their plan was not carried out, and their effort turned out to be in vain. For the sons of the holy Church chose to die for Christ rather than to live impiously.[8]

The tendentious character of this narrative is obvious, but there is no explicit assertion that the Persians might have been predisposed to favor the Jews, although that is more than likely. Strategios also mention another religious constituency in the city, apparently the pagans, whom he calls, in conformity with the widespread usage of the time, Greeks (Hellenes), but he accuses these people of cowardice. For Strategios the Christians, with whom the Persians struggle, are called simply Christians, and the Persians' friends, the Jews, are called Jews. The monk Modestus had tried to mobilize an army of so-called Greeks to help, but as soon as those poor souls had taken a look at the size of the Persian force, they fled.[9] Hence those Greeks who bolted ought probably to be

local pagans. Strategios also mentions "inhabitants of the city" who were distressed by the flight of the Greeks before the Persians, and they could well have been other pagans, those whom Modestus had not recruited. Neither the Jews nor the pagans appear to receive the slightest sympathy from the Christians, even though Strategios believed that it was the Christians who had brought on the whole catastrophe through their wanton behavior as fans of the circus factions. His entire interpretation, to say nothing of his language for the various communities in the city, is open to debate, but it would nevertheless seem reasonable to assume that the Persians had indicated both their support of the Jews and their lack of hostility towards the pagans. The Byzantine Christians were their target.

At more or less the same time as Strategios was writing, a second eyewitness report came from the monk and future patriarch Sophronius, who was engaged in the composition of a series of twenty-two bravura Greek poems in the classical Anacreontic meter to celebrate liturgical feasts. Sophronius, who was also known as a sophist, was clearly steeped in Greek poetic traditions, and his twenty-two Anacreontic poems (a twenty-third is rightly considered spurious) include a piece on the Persian capture of Jerusalem, as well as two others on the city's holy places.[10] It is unknown whether Sophronius was in the city in 614, although he certainly had been there and was briefly in Alexandria later, where he was with his friend John Moschus. He soon left Alexandria for Rome with Moschus, who died in the city. The fourteenth of Sophronius' Anacreontic poems is entirely devoted to the capture of the holy city, and, like Strategios' account, appears to be based on personal experience, or at the very least on direct testimony from an eyewitness. It inveighs mercilessly against the Sassanian invaders, who are called not only Persians, but also, derogatively, Medes and Parthians. Sophronius wrote, in vivid language, "The treacherous Mede arrived from wicked Persia, fighting cities and citizens, fighting the lord of Rome (that is, Byzantium) . . . A daemon has arisen in blazing rage and envy of the knife, destroying many holy cities with bloody swords." The poem then alludes to the Jews: "When they (the Christians) saw the Parthians at hand together with their Jewish friends, they ran off at once and fastened the gates of the city" to pray for Christ's help.

Sophronius died in 638 after serving as the patriarch of Jerusalem for the previous four years. His poem on the Persian capture of the city cannot be dated precisely, but it obviously reflects the outrage he felt. It acquires a special poignancy when we recall that in his last year as patriarch he made a pact with the Muslim Caliph 'Umar ibn al Khaṭṭāb to turn over Jerusalem to the Arabs.[11]

This is but another thread in the tangled web of relations among the Persians, Byzantines, and Arabs, as the struggle between the two old empires and the rising new one played itself out.

If we can find some kind of historical explanation for the role of Jews during the capture of Jerusalem in 614, even after discounting the tendentiousness of the story of the reservoir as narrated by Strategios, we are still left with a wealth of topographical details about mass burials and devastated churches, and these details have long colored modern accounts of the capture of the city. The numbers of the Christian dead are given in the tens of thousands, which is intrinsically improbable. The Nea Church of the Theotokos, the Church of Holy Zion, the Church of the Probatica, and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, as well as churches on the Mount of Olives, figure prominently in modern accounts. Many of these sites appear, with an appeal to archaeological remains, in Ben Isaac's comprehensive introduction to Jerusalem's history at the beginning of the first volume of the recently published *Corpus* of inscriptions of Judaea and Palestine.[12] But we now owe to Gideon Avni a thorough and definitive report on the archaeological evidence both for mass burials and the destruction of churches.[13] With the data and support supplied by many of his colleagues, he makes a powerful case against the historical value of much of Strategios' evidence, without, as in Strategios' comments on the Jews, rejecting it altogether.[14]

Avni observes that a certain Thomas, according to Strategios, organized the burial of the Christian dead in Jerusalem in thirty-five different locations. Although some of these locations can be correlated with known sites, overall careful archaeological examination of the stratigraphy either shows no evidence for destruction layers at the time of the Persian invasion or lacks ceramic materials that might be used to date any burnt layers. As for actual burials, only seven sites of Byzantine date have been discovered, and these are all outside the Old City.[15] The one secure correlation with the information in Strategios occurs in the case of a rock-cut cave in Mamilla, some 120 meters west of the Jaffa Gate. Strategios states that masses of Christians assembled in the Mamilla pool were massacred, and that the pious Thomas removed their corpses to a nearby cave. The cave that has been excavated at Mamilla proved to be full of human bones, and a small chapel in front of it was decorated with Christian symbols, including three crosses. Anthropological analysis of the bones has suggested that most of the hundreds of skeletons in the cave were the remains of young persons, with women outnumbering men. Avni writes, "All this suggests that the deceased met a sudden death."[16]

In the Mamilla cave, as well as in the six other mass burials of the same period, the method of burial, as Avni has stressed, is very different from other Byzantine burials in Jerusalem. These normally were in spaces devoted to a family or in crypts within the grounds of a monastery. So the seven mass burials are indeed exceptional, indicating a hasty removal of corpses and reasonably pointing to the time of the Persian invasion. But, with that said, it is clear that the number of deaths and sepulchres is far less than Strategios has described, and this encourages skepticism about his reports of the devastation of buildings, especially churches. Despite previous archaeological claims of evidence for this devastation, Avni stresses that the interpretations were inaccurate because there was no reasonable ceramic classification to provide a credible chronology. The recent and extensive analysis carried out by Jodi Magness now reveals a remarkable continuity of pottery types, as well as coins, that has suggested to many historians in recent years an uninterrupted occupation across and beyond the Persian conquest, as well the Islamic.[17]

Robert Schick has emphasized in his invaluable work on the Christian communities of Palestine that the Church of the Holy Sepulchre is often said to have been set on fire and seriously damaged, providing an opportunity for the holy Modestus to make major repairs with the help of donations from the pious.[18] But we now know that there was no significant damage to the Church in the early seventh century, nor were there any substantial repairs or renovations.[19] Thanks to Leah Di Segni's acute analysis of monograms inscribed on the Byzantine capitals of the Church, we learn that the emperor Maurice installed the capitals during repairs at the end of the sixth century. These were left untouched by the Persian invaders.[20] Similarly, Avni has demolished the archaeological conclusions, on which Ben Isaac had relied, for the destruction at the Church of Holy Zion as well as Eleona and Gethsemane on the Mount of Olives.

It will always be possible that whatever damage the Persians did in Jerusalem was so rapidly repaired that no traces remained, but the odds are against this when such a partisan source as Strategios can be convicted of exaggeration and error in both his numbers of the dead and the location of mass burials. But recent excavations on the northwest side of the City of David hill provide an instructive modification of this conclusion. A horde of 264 mint-condition gold coins has been discovered in what seems to have been an administrative building. These coins are unique, representing a hitherto unknown variant of Heraclius' coinage as it appears between 610 and 613. The 264 unexampled coins, all including a particularly egregious error in which the first letter of Heraclius' name appears

as an A rather than an H, look to excavators, with good reason, as if they were struck locally in a temporary mint in Jerusalem that was set up to provide cash for the Byzantine occupation force. If so, the horde represents a desperate effort to salvage the money when the building itself was destroyed, as it seems to have been. Because the date would evidently be soon after 613, we may well have in this new discovery a trace of the Persian invasion in 614, but if so, this was clearly not a violation of a sacred building.[21] The scholars who have published this new horde ask whether the coins could have come from a Byzantine treasury used for paying troops, and that, of course, may be precisely why the Persians might have wanted to break up the building. Holy places and sectarian struggles do not seem, however, to have had any part in the Persian action at the site, and to that extent the new excavations, while documenting destruction in 614, in no way alter the picture that archaeologists have constructed in the last few years for Jerusalem's tombs and churches.

In fact, the picture that has now emerged of the holy city after the Persians moved on into Egypt bears a startling resemblance to the one that Clive Foss sketched nearly a decade ago for all the places through which the armies of Khosroes II passed after the usurpation of Phocas.[22] It had become commonplace to assume, as Kondakov and Vasiliev had done long ago, that the Persian invasion wiped out the civilization of the region, as well as its agriculture, its cities, and its trade. This apocalyptic vision has not only informed subsequent scholarship but has led archaeologists to interpret their data in accordance with it. It dominated the fundamental study of Scythopolis by Gideon Foerster and Yoram Tsafrir in 1997.[23] The devastation of the Persian invasion seemed to many to have facilitated the early Islamic conquests.

While acknowledging that the various fragmentary chronicles upon which historians are obliged to rely often suggest that Persian rule "was a disaster for the local populations, featuring bloodshed and extraordinary exactions,"[24] Foss meticulously documented the systematic retention of local administrative structures by the Persians and the modest scope of their more violent acts, usually in response to resistance. In Armenia, for example, after an initial deportation of the citizens of Theodosiopolis, the Persians secured the city to such an extent that a new church could be dedicated and the cathedral restored.[25] Similarly at Edessa in Mesopotamia, Khosroes' initial savagery was followed by a benevolent administration that recognized ancestral landholding and supported the local Monophysites.[26] The Persian invaders understandably won the allegiance of Christians who believed that their new masters would keep the Byzantine Chalcedonians out. After the first jolt, life in Edessa was not much

altered.

At Caesarea-on-the-sea, to judge from the survival of the churches of Christ and of St. Cornelius and the Tetrapylon, a similar picture of continuity after initial disruption emerges. While some continue to believe that the Persian raids had a substantial impact on the city and its population, recent work, particularly by Jodi Magness, seems clearly to move in the opposite direction.[27] Overall, as Foss observed, the archaeological record "offers little corroboration for notions of widespread destruction at the hands of the Sassanian invaders. On the contrary, as in the case of southern Syria, evidence from the outlying regions of the Holy Land reveals normal activity continuing through the occupation, with numerous inscriptions dated to the period 614–630."[28] This revisionist account of the Persian invasion in the seventh century has encouraged a new consensus about the Near East on the eve of the Islamic conquests. Instead of lying desolate and ready for new rulers, it can be seen as already experienced in survival under a foreign power, and therefore all the more likely to be accommodating when a new one arrived. Since the Persians generally supported the Monophysites, they were able to maintain their struggle against Byzantium in a doctrinal way that was not unlike their support of Jews in Jerusalem in their opposition to the orthodox Christians they found in the city. Certainly the Christians suffered grievously, but there is little indication that either the Jews or the pagans did.

The aftermath of the Persian capture of Jerusalem was, above all, the occupation of Egypt. Alexandria had received mostly Chalcedonian refugees, who were uncomfortable in Palestine with a foreign administration that supported Monophysites, but the arrival of the Persians exiled these Chalcedonians yet again. Such a dedicated Christian as John the Almsgiver, orthodox patriarch of Alexandria from 610 to 617, chose to leave his flock and flee to Cyprus, where he died in 619. Even the future patriarch of Jerusalem, Sophronius, who had recently come to Alexandria and had written—or would soon write—such eloquent verses about the capture of the city, decamped as well for Rome. The Persians cleverly exploited the confessional confusion of near-eastern Christendom in their war against Byzantium. This meant that the brunt of the invasion fell upon the Chalcedonians and the emperor Heraclius, against whom the Sassanians were waging their war. In pacifying and administering the regions they had conquered, they created a world that was not much different from what it had been before, with its rich traditions of Judaism, Christianity, paganism, and Hellenism.

Accordingly when the armies of Muḥammad arrived, they did not find a shattered civilization and a ruined economy. They found Christian communities

that the previous invaders had supported, as well as Chalcedonians like Sophronius, who had returned peacefully to Jerusalem in 619 to bury his friend John Moschus. At some point after his exile in Alexandria, Sophronius included among his Anacreontic poems on church feasts not only his bitter lamentation over the Persian invasion, but also two further poems that were a detailed and nostalgic celebration of the city's principal monuments and holy places. Exactly when he wrote these is unclear, but we know that he was back in Jerusalem by 619. He had either experienced the events of 614 in person or was well informed about them, and five years later he certainly saw the condition of the city at that time with his own eyes. Since he is unlikely to have been composing fancy Greek verses when Moschus was dying in Rome, the odds are that the Anacreontics about the glories of Jerusalem were written after he had actually returned to the city. The poems themselves imply, by their impassioned longing to see the various monuments, that he was away when he was writing them, or perhaps, by a common literary artifice, imagined he was away. But, in any case, absolutely nothing in the two poems about the holy places of Jerusalem suggests that Sophronius was aware of the slightest damage or destruction to any of them.

Meanwhile, the Arabs in Arabia showed little interest in the quarrels of Monophysites and Chalcedonians, and there was no reason why they should. They could remember that the monophysite negus of Ethiopia had gladly made common cause with the orthodox emperor in Constantinople, and that refugees from the civil strife in the Prophet's city of Mecca had fled for safety, at an early stage, to Axum. At the moment of Muḥammad's emigration (*hijra*) from Mecca to Medina in 622, the superpowers of the Near East were still Sassanian Persia and the state that we call Byzantium, but was known everywhere in the region simply as Rome. One of these was soon to be annihilated. Neither of them could possibly have expected that. But the hagiographical tradition suggests that the holy Anastasius, who had been a Zoroastrian in the Persian army at Ctesiphon when the fragments of the True Cross arrived there from Jerusalem after 614, was moved to convert to Christianity, and he, so we are told, at least at the time of his subsequent martyrdom, allegedly foretold the death of Khosroes and the end of his empire.[29] It seems that the Prophet Muḥammad in Mecca may have also foretold this momentous event, and that will be the theme of my third and final lecture.

3

HERACLIUS' GIFT TO ISLAM THE DEATH OF THE PERSIAN EMPIRE

The Persian invasions of Palestine and Egypt posed a serious dilemma for the Byzantine emperor Heraclius, who had succeeded the usurper Phocas in 610. He was confronted by hostile Avars in the vicinity of Constantinople, and yet he could not ignore the Persian presence in the near-eastern territories that had formerly been his. His army suffered an ignominious defeat near Der'a in Syria in 613 that greatly impressed the local population. So Heraclius made a truce with the Avars in 623, which allowed him to carry on with a new military expedition he had launched in the previous year against the Sassanians in Anatolia and Armenia. He proceeded from a base in the Gulf of Iskenderun in the northeast corner of the Mediterranean. The Byzantine historian Theophanes Confessor states that Heraclius deliberately arranged the truce with the Avars in order to prepare for the next phase of war with Persia, and Walter Kaegi, in his study of Heraclius, declared that Theophanes was surely right. After skirmishing with Persian forces in the Taurus, Heraclius was able to outmaneuver his enemy and move from there into occupied Armenia.[1]

We shall see that the defeat of 613 and the subsequent campaigns did not pass unnoticed among the tribes of the Arabian peninsula. As Fred Donner has recently observed, the Prophet saw in the struggle of Heraclius against the idolatrous Zoroastrians a mirror of his own struggle against the Qurashi polytheists of Mecca.[2] Now, in an unpublished paper, Michael Lecker has emphasized the coincidence of Heraclius' new campaign in 622 precisely with the year of Muḥammad's fateful *hijra* to Medina.[3] He interprets this coincidence as the result of Jafnid (Ghassānid) influence exercised on behalf of their Byzantine patrons with the Khazraj of Medina. This suggestion bears important implications for the prophet's attitude to Byzantium, to which we must later

return. Heraclius persevered in Armenia, but by 626 a renewed Persian assault on Constantinople, cunningly launched by Khosroes together with his Avar allies, compelled him to forgo his eastern campaign and to return in haste to the capital.[4] Fortunately, at this perilous time, he was able to thwart the Persian–Avar alliance, and then, with lightning speed, to launch an unexpected new initiative against Persia. In 628, by a stroke of astonishing audacity, he personally led his forces into Mesopotamia to gain a brilliant victory over Khosroes, whose reign, together with the empire he had acquired, crumbled before the Byzantine armies.[5]

Edward Luttwak has perceptively observed, in his new book on the "grand strategy" of the Byzantine Empire, that in his Mesopotamian campaign Heraclius ignored all the conventional wisdom of Byzantine warfare by taking his troops deep into enemy territory, where they might have been isolated and annihilated. This was, in his words, "a high-risk, relational maneuver on a theater-wide scale—a historical rarity in itself."[6] But in this case it paid off.[7] The sudden and unexpected elimination of Khosroes sounded the death knell of the Sassanian Empire. His successor Kavad concluded a truce with Heraclius, although it did him little good amid the court intrigues in Persia. He too was succeeded within a year. A little over a decade later, the Sassanian Empire no longer existed at all in Mesopotamia, and ended altogether a decade after that.

Of the two great empires that had collided so often across many centuries, from the days of old Rome and the Parthians, down through the foundation of the new Rome at Constantinople and the successive dynasties of the Sassanians, only one now survived intact by 630. In that year Heraclius burnished his reputation as a Christian patriot by bringing back to Jerusalem the fragments of the True Cross, which the Persians had taken away in 614. But even so astute an emperor as Heraclius cannot conceivably have anticipated the rapid collapse of Byzantium's traditional enemy or foreseen how to administer a Near East that would no longer be subject to Persian hegemony.

The restoration of Byzantine rule west of the Euphrates was relatively straightforward and yet, at the same time, fraught with danger. The inhabitants of Syria, Palestine, and Egypt had not adapted in any significant way to alien rule, because they did not have to. The Persian occupiers had by and large taken over the administrative and cultural systems they found in place, so that what remained after they left was, apart from any physical damage their invasions had inflicted, essentially what had been there before.[8] The monophysite communities that enjoyed Persian favor now found themselves under Chalcedonian control, and so to some extent they had lost something at the same time as they regained

their freedom. But it would be wrong to imagine that the Persian withdrawal from the Near East left a seriously crippled society to the Byzantines. The danger lay in the fact that the removal of Byzantium's great antagonist left a power vacuum that Heraclius was hard put to fill, particularly since his military success had not altered the old tensions among Christians who were divided over the theology of Christ's nature.

Syria, Palestine, and now Mesopotamia itself, were exposed to non-Christian interests. These included the irredentist aspirations of Jews in Palestine and the imperialist aspirations of Arabs, whom God's Prophet in Mecca was rapidly uniting in a common cause. Political expediency might have suggested a collaboration between these two, and the Armenian chronicle that we know under the name of Sebeos actually mentions the attempts of Jews in Edessa to make common cause with nomadic Arabs.[9] But any substantial alliance of this kind had no future. After all, the Persians had conspicuously supported both the Jews of Ḥimyar and the Jews of Jerusalem. It soon became apparent that, in pushing the Sassanian Empire back into Mesopotamia and the Iranian plateau, Heraclius had bestowed an enormous gift upon the Arabs in the Arabian peninsula, as they were able to consolidate their tribes and extinguish their traditional animosities by gradually promoting the new religion promulgated by Muḥammad. At this time they called themselves, as Fred Donner has recently insisted, simply the Believers (*mu'minūn*).[10] Donner's argument that the early Believers constituted an ecumenical religious movement is hardly credible, but they undoubtedly represented the first phase of Islam as we know it.

The attention that God's Messenger and Prophet paid to what he and the Arabs generally called Rūm (Rome), designating both Constantinople and the Byzantine Empire, emerges clearly from the thirtieth sura of the Qur'ān. This chapter bears the heading Rūm. Its opening verses contain either an amazing prophecy, as Qur'ānic tradition would maintain, or else a *vaticinium ex eventu*—a prophecy after the event, composed with full knowledge of what came later. That is the kind of retrospective prophecy that we find in the Thirteenth Sibylline Oracle, with its prophetic allusions to the chaotic events of the third century, on the basis of full knowledge of what actually happened. Qur'ānic exegetes have always worked on the assumption that the Qur'ān's historical allusions, both in this sura and everywhere else in the book, can be correlated with known events, even if a consensus as to which events they were is often lacking. The Muslim practice of writing commentaries inevitably avoids the

problem of retrospective prophecy, but it does reveal considerable knowledge of the complexities of early Muslim history.

The sura on Rūm alludes explicitly to two great battles in the career of Heraclius and therefore provides a unique perspective on Arab-Byzantine relations in the very decade of the *hijra*, which occurred in 622. The text opens with references both to a Byzantine defeat at the hands of the Persians and then to a subsequent victory of the Byzantine army, and its impact on the first generation of Believers. The existence of variants in the vocalization of the two verbs for "conquer" in the opening verses of the sura has led to extensive debate in the traditional interpretation (*tafsīr*), and we shall have to return to it later, but the earliest commentaries are in agreement about the text in the form in which it is still recited and studied today.[11]

Sura 30 begins with these momentous words: "Rūm has been defeated (*ghulibat*) in a nearby land (*fī 'adnā al 'arḍi*), but after their defeat they will be victorious (*sa-yaghlibūn*) in some years (*fī biḍi sinīn*). God is the commander both before and after, and on that day the Believers will rejoice (*yafraḥul-mu'minūn*)." This text clearly mentions a Byzantine defeat in a region not far from northwest Arabia, and then a great victory afterwards, but obviously not many years later. What is most remarkable here is the reference to the Believers' rejoicing over the news of the Byzantine victory. It seems as if, for a precious instant, we are listening to an early Islamic voice proclaiming Arab support for the Christian Empire of Constantinople. If so, it was certainly not to last, as both Muslim and Christian sources amply demonstrate. The Arab invaders and the Chalcedonian Christians had become sworn enemies by the middle of the seventh century, and Constantinople soon became the target of siege engines dispatched by the early caliphs. But between the *hijra* in 622 and the Battle of the Yarmuk in 636—and even for a few years after that—the situation looks to have been vastly different. Both Christian and Muslim sources allow us to glimpse this, although the Qur'ānic verses are undoubtedly our earliest record of it.

The Persian collapse before Heraclius at Ctesiphon in 628 is generally agreed to be the decisive victory to which Sura 30 refers, and it hard to imagine any other victory that would be more appropriate. It fits more or less within the time frame implied by the reference "in some years" after a Byzantine defeat. Identifying the prior defeat is less straightforward than identifying the victory, but the best candidate would certainly be the catastrophic defeat of Heraclius'

army at Der'a in 613. As for the victory, Qur'ānic exegetes have been profligate in making chronological correlations with Islamic tradition. Their principal comparison is with the victory of the Believers over Muḥammad's Qurashi opposition at Badr in 624, although of course this comes four years before Heraclius' victory at Ctesiphon. But if Ctesiphon really is the Byzantine victory to which Sura 30 alludes, as seems more than likely, then the settlement at Ḥudaybiya in that same year (628), under which Muḥammad secured future access to Mecca for his followers, would furnish by far the most compelling correlation.[12]

The thirteenth-century Muslim exegete Ibn 'Abd al-Salām al-Sulamī contemplated a whole list of possible explanations for the Qur'ānic prophesy of the Arabs' reception of the news of Ctesiphon's fall:

> The news reached them of Chosroes' death on the day of al-Ḥudaybiya, and so they rejoiced for the weakness of the Persians and the strength of the Arabs. Or they rejoiced for the victory of the Rūm over Persia because they are *ahl al-kitāb* ("people of the book") like them; or because it is a preamble for their own victory over the polytheists; or because it authenticates the message of the Prophet.

The whole decade of the 620s was a time of enormous ferment, not to say confusion, both among the Believers, who had still to contend with a powerful polytheist, sometimes called pagan, opposition from the *kuffār* (infidels) in Mecca, and among the Byzantines, who until 628 had to reckon with the presence and the hostility of the powerful Persian Empire to their east. In addition, this cauldron of political, administrative, and religious diversity already included the animosity that the monophysite communities of the Near East felt towards the Chalcedonian champions of Christianity. The Believers knew that they could not expect any sympathy from the Sassanians, who were idolators and had worked for so long in the peninsula against the Arabs, and they also knew that the Jews, through their earlier alliance with the Persians, were unlikely to be supportive. Of course, as Sebeos reports, some Jews from northern Mesopotamia had hoped to find allies among the Monophysites, but this was a frail reed for the Believers in Mecca. Hence they saw in the Chalcedonian liberators of Jerusalem a power that simultaneously wiped out the threat from Iran and the ambitions of irredentist Jews returning to Palestine.

Rūm, however, was not only a politically advantageous ally at this moment. It was, unlike Persia, a monotheist state, and its people were, as the Muslims

recognized for centuries afterwards, a people of the book (*ahl al-kitāb*). The new monotheism of the Prophet, or rather, as he chose to call himself, the Messenger, had looked before to other monotheist regimes for help. When Muḥammad's faithful felt compelled to go into exile during the early days of his Revelation, their choice of Ethiopia as a destination clearly reflected an attempt to enlist a monotheist government with an impeccable record of opposition to Persian influence in Ḥimyar. Muḥammad did not forget the hospitality that the court at Axum showed to his followers, because it is recorded that when the negus who had received them died, Muḥammad himself performed the *ṣalāt*, or funeral prayer, for him.[13] The no less monotheist Monophysites of Syria and Palestine offered less hope to the Believers for the simple reason that they did not constitute a state. But Rūm—Byzantium—was, and its emperor had achieved the unimaginable success of destabilizing the Sassanian state. That understandably made the Believers rejoice.

The early Muslim attitude towards monotheists of other religions, particularly pagan ones, remains an insoluble, though often discussed, problem. The simple existence of monotheist belief, or of a sacred book for that matter, was no guarantee of sympathy from the Believers. Their concept of polytheism embraced a broad spectrum of belief. My colleague Patricia Crone has discussed this recently in a wideranging study of ambivalent texts about paganism in the Qur'ān.[14] The so-called *mushrikūn*, literally "sharers," are normally understood to be pagans because of the associative character of the hundreds of divinities in the pre-Islamic pantheon. Although the worshippers of these gods look like traditional polytheists, it has now become apparent to Crone that many acknowledged a hierarchy of gods and angels under a single supreme deity that made it possible, theoretically if not necessarily, for a *mushrik* to be a pagan monotheist, a Jew, or a Christian. The Messenger could therefore dissociate his Believers from some monotheistic *mushrikūn*, while accepting others as adherents of his own belief.

A fundamental Qur'ānic pronouncement on this matter, although one that Crone does not discuss, is verse 67 of Sura 3, which is concerned with Abraham. This text states explicitly that he was neither a Jew nor a Christian, but a *ḥanīf* who had committed himself to God (*kāna ḥanīfan musliman*). The verse goes to state that he was not one of the *mushrikūn* either. Hence, according to this verse,

the *Urvater* Abraham belonged to neither of the two monotheist religions, Judaism and Christianity, nor was he a pagan. What he was, namely a Muslim *ḥanīf*, is harder to ascertain. From the parallel word in Syriac (*ḥanpā*), where it clearly means pagan or heathen (it is the standard epithet applied to Julian as an apostate), Arabic *ḥanīf* has been generally understood to be a word for a pagan monotheist. By describing Abraham as "committed to God" (*muslim*, used here before the term became current), the Qur'ān appears to be claiming Abraham as a Believer from the start, who came out of the ranks of enlightened pagans, yet was not a *mushrik*.

In a valuable correspondence with me, Patricia Crone offered the following reflection on this some-what paradoxical situation (and I thank her for allowing me to cite her observations):

> Whatever the history behind the word *ḥanīf* in the sense of pure, unadulterated (i.e. Muslim) monotheist may be, the Qur'ān certainly sees its *mushrik*, Jewish, and Christian opponents as the opposite of *ḥanīf*s. We may postulate that the *mushrikūn* were actually monotheists who just happened to like intermediary figures, but to the Quranic Messenger the *mushrikūn* did not count as monotheists because their beliefs were precisely what he wanted to separate himself from. Judaism and Christianity didn't count as monotheism either. Nobody was a monotheist unless as understood by him, represented by Abraham.[15]

There is plenty of food for thought and discussion here. The situation becomes curiouser and curiouser.

It seems, at any rate, that by the time of the sura on Rūm the reason for the joy of the Believers on learning of the Byzantine victory in 628 could hardly have been a feeling of fraternal monotheism. This becomes even clearer when we turn now, as we must, to the textual problems in the opening verses. From the early ninth century, according to the *tafsīr* tradition, reports were circulating, though largely denied, that the key verbs *ghulibat* and *sa-yaghlibūn* should be vocalized as *ghalabat* and *sa-yughlabūn*, thus "they were victorious" and later "will be defeated." Early commentators rejected these two variants out of hand. One of the greatest of them, Ibn Jarīr al-Ṭabarī, who is best known as a great Arab historian of the early tenth century, wrote an important treatise on Qur'ānic scholarship, and there he compiled and analyzed the exegetical work of the previous two and a half centuries. He stated that the vast majority of readers accepted what is still today the canonical text, with the first verb from *ghalaba*

(to conquer) in the passive voice, and the second in the active. Ṭabarī wrote,

> The only correct reading for us is *ghulibat al Rūm*, and no other reading is acceptable, for it enjoys the authoritative consensus of the *qurra'* ("readers"). The explanation of the wording is: The Persians defeated the Rūm . . . and after their vanquishing the Rūm shall be victors over the Persians . . . in a few years, for it is God's will, and on that day the Believers shall rejoice . . . for God's victory over the pagans . . . God helps whomsoever He will, for this is the victory of the Believers over the pagans at Badr.[16]

By this commentary Ṭabarī reveals, and subsequently elaborates, the relevance of the Byzantine victory over Persia to the internal struggles that the Believers had with their pagan opposition in Mecca. Ṭabarī quotes one authority, Abu Sufyān, as saying "I heard that they (the Romans, or Byzantines) won on the same day as the battle of Badr." That was the battle in which the Believers overwhelmed a much larger force of Qurashi pagans from Mecca and, fortified by the confidence they acquired, launched an attack on the Jews of Medina who opposed Muḥammad. The date of the Battle of Badr was 624, which was of course a few years before Heraclius' decisive defeat of Khosroes. The Muslim commentators wrestled candidly with this discrepancy. The alternative correlation would link the victory of Rūm over Persia in 628 with the contemporaneous treaty of Ḥudaybiya, which finally gave the Believers access to the shrine of Mecca. As Nadia El Cheikh has noticed, in her admirable treatment of the Rūm sura, the Muslim commentators attended carefully to the exact date of the Byzantine victory because of its implications for the resolution of Muḥammad's struggle with *kuffār* (infidels) of Mecca. In short, the joy of the Believers as prophesied or recorded in the Qur'ān was a direct reaction to internal conflicts that threatened their own future.

A report in the Arabic tradition of Muḥammad's biography (the *sīra*) that the Prophet sent, precisely in 628, letters to various great rulers, including Heraclius, to urge them to join the Islamic Believers, may conceivably be another reflection of the rejoicing that came with the defeat of the Sassanians. Among the other alleged recipients of a similar letter from Muḥammad was the Ethiopian negus, with whom his supporters already had established cordial ties during the so-called first *hijra* from Mecca. But on the whole it would be infinitely more

prudent to view this testimony as completely unhistorical, despite Irfan Shahîd's desire to embrace it.[17] Another recipient of a letter, according to the tradition, was Khosroes II himself, and that would mean that the good news from Ctesiphon of his defeat and death cannot be presupposed, and the jubilation over Heraclius' victory would become irrelevant. There is substantial testimony to show that the Muslim kings of Spain proudly displayed the original letter from Muḥammad to Heraclius, which the emperor had supposedly kept in a golden box,[18] but there is no evident reason to consider this precious document as anything other than a forgery. Fictional epistolography has a long and honorable literary tradition (Seneca and Paul, Jesus and Abgar, for example), but it has no place in the construction of the historical record.

It need hardly be said that within a few decades the remarkable identification of the enemies of Muḥammad with those of Byzantium inevitably dissolved, to such an extent that later Qur'ānic readers argued that the variant text in which Rūm was defeated after first being victorious would allow that later defeat to be associated with the Battle of the Yarmuk in 636. This was the momentous encounter in which the Arabs conquered the Byzantines and definitively established their claim to Syria and, subsequently, Palestine. Without the strong tradition of the reading that still prevails in Sura 30 of the Qur'ān, as well as the thoughtful and extensive commentary on it in the earliest centuries of Islam, we would never have known, or even guessed, that the Believers saw the Byzantine defeat of the Persians as a mirror of their own defeat of the *kuffār* at Mecca.

But Heraclius' gift in destabilizing the Sassanian Empire went far beyond that, and it extended well into the period in which the Believers went to war with him. What Heraclius had done was to open up the territories that the Persians had formerly ruled so that the Arabs could now move in. They not only marched into Syria but also into Mesopotamia, where, in 637 or early 638, they won a great victory in the southeast over the Sassanians led by Rustam at Qādisiyya. This impelled the shattered remnants of Persia's army to retreat, along with the surviving King of Kings, Yazdigird, into the Iranian plateau, where, about four years later, the Arabs won another victory at Nihāvand.[19]

By now Palestine lay fully open to the invaders. Already in 634 the Believers had moved into Bethlehem, as we learn from Sophronius, who was now installed as the patriarch in Jerusalem. He commented on their presence at the Church of the Nativity in a Christmas homily that showed surprisingly little concern about where the Arabs might go next. This is all the more surprising in view of Sophronius' earlier lamentation over the fall of Jerusalem before the Persian

invaders.[20]

What we seem to see here, despite all the turbulence both to the east and west of the Euphrates, is a local reflection of transitory good relations between the Believers and Byzantium as they are implied by the Qur'ānic sura of Rūm. Only two years after Sophronius' homily in 634, the Arabs won control of Syria through the Battle of the Yarmuk. This was undoubtedly the opening phase of the hostility between Christians and Muslims that was to become so fierce in the decades and centuries to follow. But the accommodation between these two peoples of the book evidently lasted a little longer in Palestine, even after the Yarmuk.

This emerges clearly from surviving accounts of the arrival of the Caliph 'Umar ibn al Khaṭṭāb in Jerusalem in 638 and the reception he received from none other than Sophronius himself in his last year as patriarch before death overtook him. 'Umar was still officially known as Commander of the Believers despite a later historical convention that considers him an early caliph. The Greek historian Theophanes Confessor describes 'Umar's appearance in Jerusalem with dramatically anti-Arab rhetoric. Fortunately, however, we are now in a position to sift through his testimony more discriminatingly than ever before, thanks to the brilliant and incisive research of a young Italian scholar, Maria Conterno, who has meticulously compared Theophanes' account with the parallel Syriac and Arabic sources that evidently derive from the same fundamental narrative.[21]

Theophanes, writing in the early ninth century and therefore long after the Christian–Muslim opposition had irremediably hardened into standard Mediterranean polemic, describes 'Umar as arriving in the holy city in nomadic attire, with modest and dirty camel-hair garments that Theophanes characterized as displaying his "satanic hypocrisy." Sophronius, as all sources agree, made a treaty with 'Umar guaranteeing the security of Palestine on condition that no Jew be allowed in the city. But, according to Theophanes, when 'Umar proposed to ascend the Temple Mount to pray, which would not have been at all out of character for a Believer in a holy place at that time, Sophronius is said to have exclaimed, in the words of the prophet Daniel, "This is the abomination of desolation." Then when Sophronius offered 'Umar clean clothes to put on for his prayers, the caliph merely borrowed them until his own could be washed.[22]

Dot.essa Conterno has been able to demonstrate that the account in Theophanes is actually drawn from an early Greek source, not an oriental one, and it was this Greek source that formed the basis of the Syriac tradition as it is

found in the chronicle of Zuqnin, the Chronicle of 1234, and in Michael the Syrian, as well as in the Arabic history of the Melkite historian Agapius. The precious extant Semitic texts, taken together, allow us, therefore, to observe how Theophanes has tendentiously augmented what he found in his source. We can now see that that source was informed by reports close to the time. It was excerpted and translated from the Greek by subsequent Syriac and Arabic writers who had access to it. By comparing the Syriac and Arabic versions it is easy to tell that the original, which Theophanes used, presented a uniformly positive view of Sophronius' reception of 'Umar. There is no trace whatever of satanic hypocrisy, of the abomination of desolation, or of 'Umar as a dirty outsider. The episode of the clothing is simply a sign of the caliph's modest bearing, and his desire to pray on the Temple Mount is seen as uncontroversial. Through this new understanding of Theophanes' allegedly oriental, but actually Greek, source, the miraculous accommodation of Christians and Arab Believers, hinted at in the Qur'ān, can now be seen as still surviving in Jerusalem even after the Battle of the Yarmuk. Sadly we all know that in the end it was not to last.

Heraclius' great gift to the Arabs was his lethal devastation of Sassanian Persia, and this, as adumbrated or, arguably, mirrored, in the Qur'ān, greatly facilitated the transition to a new administration in the Near East. It allowed the Christian churches and Greek mosaics in the region to continue for more than another half-century. Obviously the circumstances of this short-lived accommodation rapidly disappeared in a welter of polemic from both Muslims and Christians. But it was clearly not forgotten or ignored by the exegetical tradition of the Qur'ān. Commentaries that depended upon the *isnād*, or chain of tradition, could see how interpretations of the sura of Rūm had changed over time, and a great historian such as Ṭabarī could see exactly what had happened, when and how. As Nadia El Cheikh has perceptively written,

> Working as they were within a tradition, the commentators reiterated the traditional reading and interpretation . . . It is because of this entrenched tradition that the exegetical literature took so long to turn the Byzantines into an enemy. In other Arabic literary genres, the notion of the Byzantines as a principal rival emerged much earlier.[23]

Sura 30 and its exegetes afford a glimpse into a brief time of Arab-Byzantine toleration and support. The dissolution of the Sassanian Empire was as momentous as it was improbable. If Heraclius had failed in 628 to end the Persian occupation of Syria and Palestine and to break up the central administration in Ctesiphon, the subsequent Arab victories at the Yarmuk, as

well as in southern Mesopotamia and on the Iranian plateau, might never have happened.

Neither the Persian invasions nor the Muslim conquests after them succeeded in obliterating the hellenized culture of the Byzantine Near East in the short term. Neither the Persian nor the later Arab expeditions to take Constantinople altered the rhythm of life in Syria and Palestine for many decades. The language of administration shifted only slowly from Greek to Arabic, overtly encouraged by Abd al-Malik at the end of the seventh century. Heraclius' unintended legacy was ultimately the replacement of the empire he so decisively defeated with a new one that proved infinitely stronger, more flexible, more durable, and more aggressive. It grew incrementally across North Africa and into Spain. Its capital moved from Damascus to Baghdad. The faith that moved it and the civilization that came with it remain with us today.

NOTES

1. Byzantium, Ethiopia, and the Jewish Kingdom of South Arabia

1. For the evolution of the idea of a Second (and Third) Rome as well as the use of "Roman" for "Byzantine," see G. W. Bowersock, "Le tre Rome," *Studi Storici* 47 (2006, published 2007), 977–91, and G. W. Bowersock, "Old and New Rome in the Late Antique Near East," in *Transformations of Late Antiquity: Essays for Peter Brown*, ed. P. Rousseau and M. Papoutsakis (Ashgate, 2009), pp. 37–49.

2. For client kings, see David Braund, *Rome and the Friendly King: the Character of the Client Kingship* (London, 1984).

3. Fergus Millar, "Rome's Arab Allies in Late Antiquity. Conceptions and Representations from within the Frontiers of the Empire," in *Commutatio et contentio. Studies in the Late Roman, Sasanian, and Early Islamic Near East in Memory of Zeev Rubin*, ed. H. Börm and J. Wiesehöfer (Düsseldorf, 2010), pp. 199–226. Christian Julien Robin, "Les Arabes de Ḥimyar, des 'Romains' et des Perses (IIIe–VIe siècles de l'ère chrétienne)," *Semitica et Classica* 1 (2008), 167–202.

4. For brief but informed overviews of this Red Sea imperialism, see Christian Julien Robin, in the catalogue of the Louvre exhibition *Routes d'Arabie* (Paris 2010), pp. 81–99, and Fred Donner, *Muhammad and the Believers at the Origins of Islam* (Cambridge, MA, 2010), pp. 1–38. In addition, see G. W. Bowersock, *The Adulis Throne* (Oxford University Press, forthcoming), for a fuller treatment.

5. For a detailed examination of the evidence, Gianfranco Fiaccadori, "Sembrouthes 'Gran Re' (*DAE* IV 3 = *RIÉth* 275) per la storia del primo ellenismo aksumita," *La Parola del Passato* 335 (2004), 103–57.

6. See Stuart Munro-Hay, *Catalogue of the Aksumite Coins in the British Museum* (London, 1999).

7. The epigraphical documents are collected, in Ge'ez and Greek, in the fundamental work of A. J. Drewes, R. Schneider, and E. Bernand, *Recueil des inscriptions de l'Éthiopie des périodes pré-axoumites et axoumite*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1991–2000), abbreviated henceforth as *RIÉ*. English translations of some of the texts may be found in *Fontes Historiae Nubiorum*, ed. T. Eide et al., vol. 3 (Bergen, 1998).

8. For Frumentius, Albrecht Dihle, "Frumentios und Ezana," remains valuable: *Umstrittene Daten: Untersuchungen zum Auftreten der Griechen am Roten Meer* (Cologne, 1965), pp. 36–64. For a recent discussion, see Alexei Murav'yov, "Nachalo vtoroi volny christianizatsii Aksuma," in *Vestnik Drevnei Istorii* (2009), 181–97.

9. Munro-Hay, *Catalogue of the Aksumite Coins*, p. 16.

10. *RIÉ*, vol. 1, no. 192. For sixth- and seventh-century Ethiopian Christianity, see G. W. Bowersock, "Helena's Bridle, Ethiopian Christianity, and Syriac Apocalyptic," in *Studia Patristica*, ed. J. Baum et al. (Leuven, 2010), vol. 45, pp. 211–20.

11. The Arabic and Ethiopic accounts of the martyrdom of Arethas include references to Jews who came from Syria to Arabia after the Jewish War led by Vespasian and Titus: P. Marrassini, with A. Bausi and A. Gori, *Tradizioni orientali del Martirio di Areta* (Florence, 2006), p. 30 (Arabic), p. 120 (Ethiopic). The Ethiopic text seems to be based upon the Arabic tradition.

12. See the thorough study by Christian Julien Robin, "Ḥimyar et Israël," *Comptes Rendus de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres*, 2004, pp. 831–906.

13. Cf. Robin, "Les Arabes," pp. 172–73.

14. On Raḥmānism and the people of Israel, see Robin (n. 12 above), pp. 852–53 and 867–69.

15. A. F. L. Beeston, "The Martyrdom of Azqir," *Proceedings of the Seminar for Arabian Studies* 15 (1985), 5–10, reprinted in *A. F. L. Beeston at the Arabian Seminar*, ed. M. C. A. Macdonald and C. S. Phillips (Oxford, 2005), pp. 113–18.

16. See I. Shahîd, *The Martyrs of Najrân*. New Documents (Brussels, 1971), and M. Detoraki, *Le Martyre de Saint Aréthas et de ses compagnons* (Paris, 2007).

17. The fundamental treatment is now Iwona Gajda, *Le royaume de Ḥimyar à l'époque monothéiste* (Paris, 2009), in which a series of appendixes examines the arguments for the era of Ḥimyar. There is unfortunately a bad typographical error on p. 270, in the sixth line from the bottom of the text, where 510, instead of the correct 110, is given as the beginning of the Ḥimyarite era.

18. *RIÉ* no. 195, stone 2,1. 24 (*kebra dāwīt*).

19. Christian Julien Robin, "Joseph, dernier roi de Ḥimyar (de 522 à 525, ou une des années suivantes)," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 34 (2008), 1–124.

20. Detoraki, *Le Martyre de Saint Aréthas*, provides a full review of these various sources.

21. David G. K. Taylor, "A Stylistic Comparison of the Syriac Ḥimyarite Martyr Texts Attributed to Simeon of Beth Arsham," in *Juifs et Chrétiens en Arabie aux Ve et VIe siècles. Regards croisés sur les sources*, ed. J. Beaucamp, F. Briquel-Chatonnet, and Chr. Julien Robin, Collège de France Monographies 32 (Paris, 2010), pp. 143–76.

22. FHG (Müller) IV, pp. 178–80. For a full discussion of this important testimony see G. W. Bowersock, "Nonnosus and Byzantine Diplomacy in Arabia," forthcoming in *Rivista Storica Italiana*, in a fascicle honoring Emilio Gabba.

23. Gajda, *Le royaume de Ḥimyar*, pp. 111–18, with Procopius, *Bella* I 20. 1.

24. George Hatke has well argued this point in his valuable doctoral dissertation, *Africans in Arabia Felix: Aksumite Relations with Ḥimyar in the Sixth Century C.E.*, Princeton University, November 2010.

25. Procopius, *Bella* I 19. 1.

26. For all this, see Bowersock, "Nonnosus and Byzantine Diplomacy in Arabia," above.

27. The inscription is of immense importance in documenting Abraha's activities in this period: *Corpus Inscriptionum Semiticarum* IV. 541.

28. This is the inscription from Bir Murayghān known as Ryckmans 506, for which see J. Ryckmans, in his article "Inscriptions historiques sabéennes de l'Arabie centrale: Inscription de Muraighān" *Le Muséon* 56 (1953), 339–42, with comment by A. F. L. Beeston, in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 16 (1954), 391–92.

2. The Persian Capture of Jerusalem

1. See the data assembled by Claudine Dauphin on the basis of Mandate and Israeli archives in her three volumes, *La Palestine byzantine: peuplement et populations* (Oxford, 1998). For Gallus and Julian, see now Oded Irshai, "Jewish Violence in the Fourth Century CE—Fantasy and Reality: Behind the Scenes under the Emperors Gallus and Julian," in *Jewish Identities, in Memoriam of Menahem Stern*, ed. I. L. Levine and D. Schwartz (Tübingen, 2009), pp. 387–411.

2. For narratives of the events with supporting testimony see Walter E. Kaegi, *Heraclius. Emperor of Byzantium* (Cambridge, 2003) and Glanville Downey, *A History of Antioch in Syria from Seleucus to the Arab Conquest* (Princeton, 1961). Edward Luttwak includes some of these events in his overview, *The Grand Strategy of the Byzantine Empire* (Cambridge, MA, 2009); cf. my review in the *London Review of Books* 32. 3, 11 February 2010, pp. 17–18.

3. The classic studies are Th. Nöldeke, *Die Ghassânischen Fürsten aus dem Hause Gafna's* (Berlin, 1887) and G. Roth-stein, *Die Dynastie der Laḫmiden in al-Ḥîra. Ein Versuch zur arabisch-persischen Geschichte zur Zeit der Sasaniden* (Berlin, 1899). For current documentation and research, Christian Julien Robin's paper on Ḥimyarite Arabs, Romans (i.e. Byzantines), and Persians is fundamental: "Les Arabes de Ḥimyar, des 'Romains' et des Perses (IIIe–VIe siècles de l'ère chrétienne)," *Semitica et Classica* 1 (2008),

167–202.

4. Iwona Gajda, *Le royaume de Ḥimyar à l'époque monothéiste* (Paris, 2009), pp. 157–67 ["La domination perse de l'Arabie du Sud"].

5. Christian Julien Robin, "Ḥimyar et Israël," *Comptes Rendus de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres*, 2004, pp. 831–906: for Bet She'arim and the Homerite (Ḥimyarite) tombs, p. 836, and for the Leah epitaph, p. 891 (no. 9), for which see also G. W. Nebe and A. Sima, "Die aramäisch/hebräisch–sabäische Grabinschrift der Lea," *Arabian Archaeology and Epigraphy* 15 (2004), 76–83.

6. See G. W. Bowersock, "Polytheism and Monotheism in Arabia and the Three Palestines," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 51 (1977), 1–10 ad fin. This paper was reprinted in *Selected Papers on Late Antiquity* (Bari, 2000), pp. 135–47.

7. Gérard Garitte, *La prise de Jérusalem par les Perses en 614*, CSCO, vol. 203 (Louvain, 1960). Vol. 202, of the same year, contains the Georgian text. Cf. F. C. Conybeare, "Antiochos Strategos' Account of the Sack of Jerusalem in 614," *English Historical Review* 25 (1910), 502–17.

8. Strategios 10. 2, pp. 17–18 (Garitte).

9. Strategios 7. 1–3, p. 13 (Garitte), notably the phrase *ad congregandum Graecorum exercitum*. The narrative of Strategios ends with an appendix on the recovery of the True Cross and the return of the Christian captives in 630. This not only follows a definitive conclusion (*amen*) to the preceding narrative but oddly refers to the Byzantine Christians as Greeks, rather than as Christians (or Romans). Inasmuch as the appendix was evidently written well over a decade after the account of 614 and exhibits such a startling change in language, I suspect that it is by another hand.

10. The poem on the capture of Jerusalem is *Anacreont.* No. 14. For the two poems on the holy places of Jerusalem, see the text, introduction, commentary and German translation by Herbert Donner, *Die anakreontischen Gedichte Nr. 19 und Nr. 20 des Patriarchen Sophronius von Jerusalem*, Sitzungsberichte der Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften, Phil.-hist. Klasse, Bericht 10 (Heidelberg, 1981).

11. Theophanes, *Chronograph*, year 6127, p. 339 (De Boor), with comparative texts in Syriac and Arabic cited ad loc. in C. Mango and R. Scott's English translation (Oxford, 1997).

12. *Corpus Inscriptionum Iudaeae/Palaestinae*, vol. 1, part 1, ed. Hannah Cotton, W. Eck, et al. (Berlin, 2010), p. 36.

13. Gideon Avni, "The Persian Conquest of Jerusalem (614 C.E.)—An Archaeological Assessment," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 357 (2010), 35–48. This whole topic has recently been addressed, too late be considered in these lectures, in a study by Yuri Stoyanov, *Defenders and Enemies of the True Cross, Sitzungsberichte der philosophisch-historischen Klasse der oesterreichischen Akademie*, Band 819 (Vienna, 2011).

14. James Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses to a World Crisis. Historians and Histories of the Middle East in the Seventh Century* (Oxford, 2010), p. 166, is understandably skeptical of the atrocities and destruction that Strategios ascribed to the Persians. It is therefore odd that Anthony Kaldellis, in reviewing this book (*BMCR*, 24 December 2010), claimed that Avni's article, cited in the foregoing note, weakens Howard-Johnston's argument when it actually reinforces it.

15. Avni, "Persian Conquest," 35–36.

16. Avni, ibid., 36.

17. Jodi Magness, "A Reexamination of the Archaeological Evidence for the Sasanian Persian Destruction of the Tyropoeon Valley," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 287 (1992), 67–74, and also Jodi Magness, *Jerusalem Ceramic Chronology: Circa 200–800 CE* (Sheffield, 1993), both of which are invoked by Avni, "Persian Conquest," 40.

18. Robert Schick, *The Christian Communities of Palestine from Byzantine to Islamic Rule* (Princeton, 1995), pp. 37–38 and 327–30, cited by Avni, "Persian Conquest."

19. G. Avni and J. Seligman, "New Excavations at the Holy Sepulchre Compound," in *One Land, Many Cultures: Archaeological Studies in Honour of Stanislao Loffreda OFM*, ed. G. C. Bottini et al. (Jerusalem,

2003), 153–62. Avni, "Persian Conquest," 42, refers to a forthcoming article by Seligman and himself in *'Atiqot*.

20. Leah Di Segni, "Epigraphic Finds Reveal New Chapters in the History of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in the Sixth Century," *New Studies on Jerusalem* 12 (2006), 157–63 and 20* (English abstract). See the observations of Denis Feissel at *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum* 56, no. 1897.

21. Doron Ben-Ami, Yana Tchekhanovets, and Gabriela Bijovsky, "New Archaeological and Numismatic Evidence for the Persian Destruction of Jerusalem in 614 CE," *Israel Exploration Journal* 60 (2010), 204–21. Gabriela Bijovsky has now presented the Heraclius coins from Jerusalem at greater length and with more ample illustration in her paper, "A Single Die Hoard of Heraclius from Jerusalem," in *Mélanges Cécile Morrisson, Travaux et Mémoires* 16 (Paris, 2010), pp. 55–92.

22. Clive Foss, "The Persians in the Roman Near East," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Series 3, 13. 2 (2003), 149–70.

23. G. Foerster and Y. Tsafrir, "Urbanism at Scythopolis—Beth Shean in the Fourth to Seventh Centuries," *Dumbarton Oaks Papers* 51 (1997), 85–146.

24. Foss, "Persians in the Roman Near East," 154.

25. For Theodosiopolis, Armenian Karin, see Sebeos (trans. Thomson), p. 64.

26. Foss, "Persians in the Roman Near East," 155–56.

27. See Gideon Avni, "From Polis to Madina Revisited—Urban Change in Byzantine and Early Islamic Palestine," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 3, 21. 2 (2011), 1–29, especially p. 17. I am very grateful to Dr. Avni for showing me this paper in proof.

28. Caesarea: Foss, "Persians in the Roman Near East," 162. Quotation, p. 164.

29. For the *Acta* of St. Anastasius and correlative texts, with commentary, see Bernard Flusin, *Saint Anastase le Perse et l'histoire de la Palestine au début du VIIe siècle*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1992): *Acta* 7 (arrival of the True Cross in Persia), 42 (prophecy of Khosroes' death).

3. Heraclius' Gift to Islam

1. For these tumultuous events see the narrative and documentation in Walter E. Kaegi, *Heraclius. Emperor of Byzantium* (Cambridge, 2003) chapters 2 and 3, particularly p. 78 on Der'a, and pp. 120–21 on the truce with the Avars. For that cf. Theophanes, *Chronograph*, year 6111, p. 302 (De Boor).

2. Cf. Fred M. Donner, *Muhammad and the Believers at the Origins of Islam* (Cambridge, MA, 2010), pp. 39–50.

3. Michael Lecker, "Were the Ghassānids and the Byzantines behind Muḥammad's *hijra*?," to appear in the proceedings of the conference "Cross Perspectives of History and Archaeology on the Jafnid Dynasty" (Paris, 12–13 November 2008), ed. Christian Robin.

4. Peter van Alfen and others reported in January 2011 to the Archaeological Institute of America at the meetings in San Antonio about their research on the Byzantine shipwreck at Yassiada off the western coast of Turkey. From the coins in the wreck (no later than August 626) and an exceptional cargo of amphoras that included liturgical oil, it appears that the ship was not engaged in commercial activity. Van Alfen and his colleagues suggest that the ship was on its way with supplies for Constantinople when it was still under siege in 626. A general reassessment of the Yassiada wreck is forthcoming from the Texas A&M Press, with contributions from van Alfen, Frederick van Doorninck, Michael McCormick, and others.

5. In his new book, *The Grand Strategy of the Byzantine Empire* (Cambridge, MA, 2009), Edward Luttwak emphasizes the audacity of Heraclius in undertaking his strike into the heart of the Sassanian realm. For the details see Kaegi, *Heraclius. Emperor of Byzantium*, pp. 156–91.

6. Luttwak, ibid., p. 408.

7. See my discussion of Luttwak's argument in *London Review of Books* 32. 3, 11 February 2010, pp. 17–18.

8. Foss, "The Persians in the Roman Near East," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, Series 3, 13. 2

(2003), 149–70.

9. Sebeos 42 (p. 96 Thomson). James Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses to a World Crisis. Historians and Histories of the Middle East in the Seventh Century* (Oxford, 2010), has chosen to name this author Pseudo-Sebeos and his work *History of Khosrov*, pp. 72–73. Cf. R. Hoyland, "Sebeos, the Jews and the Rise of Islam," in *Studies in Muslim-Jewish Relations*, ed. R. Nettler, vol. 2 (1996), pp. 89–102, and Walter E. Kaegi, *Heraclius. Emperor of Byzantium*, pp. 204–5.

10. Donner, *Muhammad and the Believers*, pp. 56–61.

11. See the excellent analysis by Nadia Maria El Cheikh, "sūrat al-rūm: A Study of the Exegetical Literature," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 118 (1998), 354–64.

12. For Ḥudaybiya, see Donner, *Muhammad and the Believers*, p. 48, and El Cheikh, "Sūrat al-rūm", p. 362, citing Ibn 'Abd al-Salām al-Sulamī.

13. For the voluntary withdrawal of Believers to Ethiopia and Muḥammad's sympathetic reaction to the death of the negus, see the discussion in Wim Raven, "Some Early Islamic Texts on the Negus of Abyssinia," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 33 (1988), 197–218. Also, I. Shahîd, "The Hijra (Emigration) of the Early Muslims to Abyssinia: The Byzantine Dimension," in *To Ellinikon. Studies in Honor of Speros Vryronis, Jr.*, vol. 2 (1993), pp. 203–13.

14. Patricia Crone, "The Religion of the Qur'ânic Pagans: God and the Lesser Deities," *Arabica* 57 (2010), 151–200.

15. P. Crone to G. W. Bowersock, electronic message of 3 January 2011.

16. al-Ṭabarī, *jāmi' al-bayān fī ta'wīl al-Qur'ān* (Cairo, 1321), 21. 10ff., cited at length by El Cheikh, "Sūrat al-rūm," p. 359.

17. Irfan Shahîd, *The Arabs in Late Antiquity: Their Role, Achievement, and Legacy*, American University of Beirut, Jewett Chair of Arabic: Occasional Papers (Beirut, 2008), edited by Ramzi Baalbaki, pp. 27–28. Walter E. Kaegi, *Heraclius. Emperor of Byzantium*, p. 236, says that although Muḥammad may possibly have tried to send a courier to Heraclius to bid him to Islam, "such a messenger would have not reached him or received any kind of imperial audience or recognition." In a footnote, Kaegi says that he has not seen "the paper that Irfan Shahîd is preparing on this topic." Neither have I.

18. See Muhammad Hamidullah, "La lettre du Prophète à Héraclius et le sort de l'original," *Arabica* 2 (1955), 97–110.

19. On Qāsidiyya, Fred M. Donner, *The Early Islamic Conquests* (Princeton, 1981), p. 212, and also on Nihāvand, pp. 236–37. Also James Howard-Johnston, *Witnesses to a World Crisis*, pp. 375, 470.

20. Sophronius, *Christmas Homily*, 25 December 634, accessible in A. Gallico, *Sofronio di Gerusalemme, Le omelie* (Rome, 1991), and in J. de la Ferrière, M.-H. Congourdeau, *Sophrone de Jérusalem. Fêtes chrétiennes à Jérusalem* (Paris, 1999). The lamentation on the capture of Jerusalem, as discussed in my second lecture, is *Anacreont.* No. 14.

21. Maria Conterno's research is embodied in her thesis for the Istituto Italiano di Scienze Umane, approved *con lode e dignità di pubblicazione* on 22 February 2011. Her review of Howard-Johnston's *Witnesses to a World Crisis*, "Processo ai testimoni: un' inchiesta storiografica sulle fonti per il VII secolo," appears in the *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 24 (2011), 897–912, and addresses the problems in the traditional view, which Howard-Johnston espouses, that Theophilus of Edessa was Theophanes' oriental source. For the variant traditions of the arrival of 'Umar in Jerusalem, Dot. essa Conterno will present a full treatment in her forthcoming article, "L'abominio della desolazione nel luogo santo: l'ingresso di 'Umar a Gerusalemma nella *Cronografia* di Teofane Confessore e in tre cronache siriache."

22. Theophanes, *Chronograph*, year 6127, p. 339 (De Boor).

23. El Cheikh, "Sūrat al-rūm," pp. 363–64. Cf. Shahîd, "The Hijra (Emigration) of the Early Muslims to Abyssinia," p. 208, "The Prophet and the Muslims in the Meccan period were zealously pro-Byzantine and

anti-Persian, as documented in *Sūrat al-Rūm*."

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